BULLER'S CAMPAIGN

With the Natal Field Force 1900

E. BLAKE KNOX, R.A.M.C.

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BULLER'S CAMPAIGN

WITH

THE NATAL FIELD FORCE OF 1900

Photo by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

GENERAL SIR REDVERS BULLER, V.C.

Frontispiece.

BULLER'S CAMPAIGN

WITH THE NATAL FIELD FORCE OF 1900

BY

E. BLAKE KNOX, B.A., M.D.

LIEUTENANT ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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1902

TO

COLONEL SIR THOMAS GALLWEY, M.D.

K.C.M.G., C.B.

Royal Army Medical Corps

PRINCIPAL MEDICAL OFFICER

AND

MY BROTHER OFFICERS OF THE NATAL ARMY

THESE EXPERIENCES ARE DEDICATED

AS AN EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION OF THE GOOD

COMRADESHIP THAT EXISTED BETWEEN ALL

RANKS DURING THE CAMPAIGN

PREFACE

'The onlooker sees most of a fight.'—*Proverb.*

WHY should a doctor write a book on war? The answer may not at first be apparent. Let us give it a little attention.

Few, if any, books exist in which the position of a medical man on the battlefield is considered; little is known about what first-aid work in the field really is; little is known, even, by the initiated of what is to be expected. Like many other juniors, I had to 'cut my teeth,' and it is partly with the hope of making this process easier to others than it was to me that I record my experiences. Had I had access in the beginning to a work similar to the present one, I should perhaps have obtained useful hints.

An army surgeon with a fighting unit has opportunities of observation second to none should he care to use them; he is the onlooker, he is the non-combatant eye-witness of events likely to happen and continually happening; his position may be aptly compared to that of 'the man on the stile' or the marker at a grouse or partridge 'drive'; his professional education as a doctor will have supertrained the faculty of observation—impartial observation, too, as he can faithfully describe the fighting powers of troops in a way from which a combatant officer is

precluded, owing to the unwillingness of brave men to speak of their own actions.

A surgeon's position in a regiment being central, he has more scope as an eye-witness; besides, his time is not taken up with professional work, as a rule, until after a fight; at any rate, he sees the action up to its most critical point.

My late Commanding Officer, Colonel Sir Thomas Gallwey, P.M.O., Natal Army, writing to me on this subject, states:

'I am glad to learn that you are bringing out a book telling the story of the Natal Army during the eventful period of 1900. I consider that a military medical officer with an army in the field has exceptional opportunities for gaining information without in any way interfering with his work as a surgeon.'

An army surgeon under the conditions of modern warfare finds himself in a peculiar situation. As he necessarily follows into action the unit to which he is attached—be it cavalry, artillery, or infantry—it behoves him to make his own arrangements. He must be on the spot, alert and observant, not only of his charge, but of the enemy; he must not put himself in a position whereby he cannot exercise his skill should there be wounded; when his regiment moves, he must move, too; he must take his chance of life and death like the rest, yet must ever remember the gravity of his charge, and must not recklessly expose either it or himself; nor can he expect the Geneva Cross to afford protection in a hilly country where the brassard may only be regarded of use as a regimental badge.

My second excuse for writing these pages is the consciousness of my good fortune in being present at each and every engagement that I describe as medical

officer of one or other unit employed in the fighting lines. My duties also brought me on conversational terms with many of the enemy, both in the early and later stages of the war, and I am thus able to record certain hitherto unpublished items of interest bearing on the campaign, gathered from the Boer side, all of which I have given as nearly as possible in the words of the speakers.

During lulls in my professional work I made a point of entering all items of real interest into my diary of the day; this diary I illustrated with sketches, battle-maps, and photographs, afterwards tearing out those pages and sending them home as part of my weekly letter to my parents. These notes, battle-maps, and photos form the basis of my book.

I have endeavoured to present a brief, though accurate, account of some of the enormous difficulties that General Buller's army had to surmount; concerning these considerable vagueness seems to prevail in this country. If ever truth lay at the bottom of a well, it must have been during wartime, and the Natal Campaign has verified the proverb.

I am not so presumptuous as to imagine that an army doctor can fulfil the rôle of Piscator in the well; this office will be taken up in time by other hands, and it does not come within the scheme of my book to treat of or to criticise 'feats of broil and battle' other than as they were seen by an onlooker, who learned in the course of his duty to appreciate the sterling worth of the British officer and Tommy Atkins.

ERNEST BLAKE KNOX.

8, MILWARD TERRACE, BRAY.

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PROLOGUE

WHEN the Boer Army invaded Natal on October 12, 1899, their plan of campaign was to overrun that colony and seize its principal port—Durban—with the aim of preventing the landing of our reinforcements. To Sir George White falls the credit of frustrating this, in that he threw himself across their path, and, by electing to hold Ladysmith, retained the bulk of the Boer Army, and, what was more important, sustained the prestige of the Empire by standing firm, and holding not only an important town, but also a very considerable amount of stores, which he might otherwise not have been able to carry away.

The investment of Ladysmith by the Boers was complete on November 2, 1899. Two days previous to this Sir Redvers Buller arrived in Cape Town, and his plans had to be modified by the Boer initiative; the relief of Ladysmith was of primary importance, for in that town troops to the number of 13,436 men, under Sir George White, were shut up. These consisted of:

REGULARS.

INFANTRY.

1st Devonshires.
1st Gloucestershires (half-batt.).
1st Manchesters.
2nd Gordons.
1st Royal Irish Fusiliers (half-batt.).
1st Leicestershires.
1st King's Royal Rifles.
1st Liverpool.
2nd King's Royal Rifles.
2nd Rifle Brigade.

CAVALRY.

5th Lancers.	18th Hussars (part only).
19th Hussars.	5th Dragoon Guards.

ARTILLERY.

13th, 21st, 42nd, 53rd, 67th, and 69th Field Batteries (each six 15-pounders).

10th Mountain Battery (two muzzle-loading 7-pounders, two 12-pounders, quick-firers).

Also two old 6·3-inch howitzers, firing 80-pound shell.

IRREGULARS AND NATAL TROOPS.

Imperial Light Horse; Natal Police; Durban Naval Volunteers (one Nordenfeldt quick-firer); Border Mounted Rifles; Town Guard; Natal Artillery (with six 9-pounder muzzle-loaders); Natal Mounted Rifles.

NAVAL BRIGADE.

Two 4·7-inch guns; four long naval 12-pounders.

Ladysmith had to be relieved. The question was, How? Two methods suggest themselves:

1. Direct relief, by an advance from South Natal—that is, a relief from within the colony.

2. Automatic relief, by an advance from the Orange River on Bloemfontein—that is, an advance from outside the frontiers of Natal.

In favour of the direct route was the fact that it would prevent Natal being overrun by the enemy, which must occur if reinforcements were not sent. Unless the main army were sent to Natal, no other troops could be spared. Against this route was the mountainous nature of Natal, the presence of an unfordable river—the Tugela—backed as it was by an almost impregnable position, which we know too well—a position referred to by a German Attaché with the Natal Field Force as requiring at least *three army corps* to force.

In favour of an automatic relief, by an advance from the Orange River on Bloemfontein, was the difference of the sphere of operations. Had such an advance been made, it is not apparent that in itself it would have affected the relief of Ladysmith, as the forcing of the mountain-passes of the Drakensberg which lead into Natal would have to be reckoned with, and the enemy always had a line of retreat open to the north or to the east. Be it remembered that by that time they could have overrun Natal.

General Buller decided that Ladysmith must be relieved from within Natal, and it is certain that by this decision he saved the Empire from great disaster. From his past experiences, he knew the almost impregnable position that presented itself along the Tugela, the forcing of which was a task that no man could depute to another. He did not depute it; he went for it himself. He made his first attempt at Colenso on December 15, 1899, with four brigades of infantry, and failed. He then withdrew the Fifth Division to Natal; it had already started for the Orange River. From its arrival at Estcourt my story starts. It brought the strength of the Natal Field Force up to that of an army corps, and its composition as it marched out of Frere on January 9, 1900, was as follows:

SECOND DIVISION: LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR F. C. CLERY.

Second Brigade: Major-General Hildyard.	Fifth Brigade: Major-General Hart.
2nd East Surreys.	1st Connaught Rangers.
2nd West Yorks.	1st and 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
2nd Devons.	1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.
2nd West Surreys.	1st Border Regiment.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

13th Hussars (one troop).
7th, 63rd, 64th, and 73rd Royal Field Artillery Batteries.
Ammunition Columns.
17th Company Royal Engineers.

FIFTH DIVISION: LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR CHARLES WARREN.

FOURTH BRIGADE: MAJOR-GENERAL LYTTELTON.

1st Rifle Brigade.
1st Durham Light Infantry.
3rd King's Royal Rifles.
2nd Scottish Rifles.

ELEVENTH BRIGADE: MAJOR-GENERAL WOODGATE.

2nd Royal Lancasters.
2nd Lancashire Fusiliers.
1st South Lancashires.
1st York and Lancaster.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

7th, 73rd, 78th, 19th, 28th, and 63rd Royal Field Artillery Batteries.
13th Hussars (one squadron).
1st Dragoon Guards (one troop).
37th Company Royal Engineers.
Ammunition Columns.

CORPS TROOPS.

TENTH BRIGADE: MAJOR-GENERAL COKE.

2nd Dorsets.
2nd Middlesex.
2nd Somerset Light Infantry.
Imperial Light Infantry.
78th Battery Royal Field Artillery.
4th Mountain Battery Royal Field Artillery.
61st Howitzer Battery Royal Field Artillery.
13th Hussars (one squadron).
Royal Engineers.
A Pontoon Troop, Telegraph Section.
Corps Troops.

CAVALRY BRIGADE.

MAJOR-GENERAL EARL OF DUNDONALD.

13th Hussars.
1st Royal Dragoons.
South African Light Horse.
Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry.
Bethune's Mounted Infantry.
Composite Mounted Infantry.
Natal Carbineers (one squadron).
Imperial Light Horse (one squadron).
Colt Battery of four guns.

NAVAL BRIGADE.

Two 4·7 quick-firing naval guns; eight long-range, quick-firing naval 12-pounders.

The total fighting force was therefore 15,000 infantry, 2,500 cavalry and mounted infantry, and 64 guns; six of the latter may be disregarded, as being mountain pieces, firing black powder and having short range, they were not used.

General Barton was left at Chieveley with the following:

SIXTH BRIGADE: MAJOR-GENERAL BARTON.

2nd Royal Fusiliers.
2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers.
2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers.
1st Royal Welch Fusiliers.
Six long-range, quick-firing naval 12-pounders.
Remnants of the two field batteries lost at Colenso.
Two 'dummy' 4·7 naval guns.

Frere Camp was left protected by the Rifle Reserve Battalion—a composite force built up of reservists whose regiments were in Ladysmith. It was commanded by Major the Hon. E. Montagu Stuart-Wortley, and officered mainly by Second Lieutenants.

The numerical strength of the combined forces of the Transvaal and Orange Free State in the field has been, and will be, a subject of considerable interest; it cannot at present be accurately stated, but the following is the most recent and probably most correct official account respecting the combined Boer Army as it existed on or about January 1, 1900:

1st Line	38,000	
2nd Line	17,000	
3rd Line	5,000*	
		60,000
Cape rebels (10,000 to 20,000), say ...	...	10,000
Natal rebels (1,000 to 3,000), say ...	...	1,000
Foreigners and riff-raff (about 15,000), say	...	10,000
	Total	81,000

* Including old men and boys, probably nearer 10,000.

Of these, the greater portion were concentrated in Natal at the time of General Buller's arrival there.

On or about January 1, 1900, some 5,000 (at least) were actively employed in the investment of Ladysmith; 4,000 were more or less doing duty as patrols and for commissariat purposes. A mobile force of 30,000 was also ranged along the Tugela, from Acton Homes on the west to Colenso on the east, to oppose the Natal Field Force in its attempt to relieve Ladysmith.

From the nature of the Tugela positions, each and every advance of the Natal Army was plainly visible, and the bulk of this mobile force were able to rapidly mass at the point each attempt to cross the Tugela was aimed at.

WITH THE NATAL FIELD FORCE

1900

CHAPTER I

THE MARCH TO THE TUGELA

JANUARY 9–18, 1900

The March of the Fifth Division from Estcourt to Frere—The Advance of the First Army Corps from Frere to the Tugela—The First Crossing of the Tugela.

RÉVEILLE sounded at 3 a.m. on January 9, in the camp of Sir Charles Warren's Division at Estcourt, and amid torrents of rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, the tracks covered with mud and slush, officers and men got to arms, and, in accordance with orders received from headquarters the night before, tents were struck. We all performed our duty in a downpour of rain, some striking tents, some taking a hasty morning meal; others, who had had former experience of South African weather, donning their great-coats. The advance-guard, consisting of a few companies of the Royal Lancaster Regiment, were already on their way; the main body was to fall in on the road over the Little Bushman River; the transport was to park near the stream. Eventually we made a good start;

but about seven miles further on we had again to cross the Bushman River, now in flood; this was not until mid-day, owing to the necessity of having the country scouted by men in skirmishing order, the roads, if we may so call them, being merely cattle-tracks, full of holes, covered with boulders, and even ant-hills, over which the transport-waggons rumbled on their way, inches deep in slush, wetting the men's legs halfway to the knee. No regular drill formation could be kept; if the men had tried to keep their line, they would have had to jump small ponds on the roadway, or else walk through them regardless of consequences. When we reached the Little Bushman River, we could see our scouts and advance-guard in possession of the hills on the opposite side. This river, which can usually be easily forded, had, owing to the rain of the night before, risen so high as to be impassable to our infantry; and the strength of the current and the presence of sharp, rugged rocks rendered it impossible to make use of the pontoon carried by the brigade.

The Royal Engineers came forward and took soundings, soon getting a rope across by which several men tried to pass; but these nearly lost their lives, for the current was extremely swift. So it was decided to wait for a decrease in the depth, as it is usual for the streams in this country to drop and rise in a few hours' time. We waited nearly four hours in a downfall of rain, the troops walking about to keep themselves warm. The ground on which they halted was soft, and so much cut up by waggons that they were practically standing in slush, to which must be added the discomfort of wet clothes. Khaki drill when wet in the presence of a breeze acts as a refrigerator, and in later operations during the campaign the authorities

have appreciated this fact, and have stopped the issue of that material, substituting serge in its place. Most of the men had left their great-coats with the waggons, permission to do so, both as regards coats and blankets, having been granted since the earlier engagements of the war, when it was found that, under a tropical sun, men harassed by the weight of their accoutrements, besides some 150 rounds of ammunition, came into camp tired out, and often useless for night pickets.

As the river began to subside, the waggons were able to cross, but not without difficulty, the Kaffir drivers leading the oxen being up to their shoulders in water. It was now resolved to attempt the bridging the river with waggons; four of these being unladen, they were firmly tied end to end across the stream and the oxen outspanned. Over this impromptu bridge the troops were marched, keeping their feet with difficulty on the slippery boards. It was laughable to see them scrambling across, and listen to their casual remarks to one another, such as, 'What price Westminster Bridge?' etc. It took some hours for the transport to get over, and of necessity some of the troops had to be detained to protect it. I was ordered to push on with the ambulance-waggons to Frere with as little delay as possible. The contents of the vehicles were chiefly a few footsore men, and of the rest the majority were reservists, in whom the quiescent germs of Indian fevers had been called again to life. These latter lay shivering, wrapped up in the Government blankets provided in every bearer company's equipment.

We arrived at Frere Camp at 6 p.m., and got both man and beast well looked after and fed in Major Kirkpatrick's Hospital (No. 4 Stationary). By the

time I had had a talk with the Staff, and obtained some light refreshment, I found that the Fifth Division had pitched tents, and had settled down to their dinner of fried bacon and biscuit—rather an odd dinner after a hard day's march; but the fresh meat that was to have met us on our arrival in Frere had miscarried, Heaven knows where, and so, being fagged and weary after our journey, we could well relish any kind of meal. Both man and beast got their well-deserved sleep that night; but we were not destined to stay long in Frere, for next morning, January 10, General Buller's entire force, with the exception of the troops under Barton demonstrating before Colenso, and those on the line of communications along the railway, struck camp, and marched out at twelve noon, under a blazing sun, in the direction of Springfield, sixteen miles distant. This was to be the first move in Sir R. Buller's second attempt to cross the Tugela, an attempt which was eventually to end in a retirement, preceded by that heavy casualty list pertaining to the Spion Kop operations. At last the First Army Corps had got on their way, comprising heavy artillery, field artillery, cavalry, mounted and ordinary infantry, a long column of commissariat, another long column of hospital equipment, field hospitals, bearer companies, the Royal Engineers with their balloon, pontoon, telegraph, and various other sections, also unwieldy traction engines, more ornamental than useful, when off a road, in a country like South Africa.

An hour's halt was made at 5 p.m. for the evening meal, consisting of the usual 'bully beef' and biscuit, and also for the purpose of letting the baggage clear the drift near Frere Station. When one considers

that there were 650 ox-waggons of supplies alone, not to mention waggons containing men's kits, ammunition, and various other kinds of equipment, the reader can perhaps realize what the baggage of 20,000 men is.* At dusk there came on a thunderstorm, being, as is usual in Natal, accompanied by a perfect deluge of rain; so we were all treated to another wetting. A temporary block occurred on the road, and my Commanding Officer sent me back to carry a message to one of the officers in charge of the transport. I had to ride some four or five miles, passing great masses of cavalry horses, artillery drivers, and so on, all jammed together. I was riding a small Basuto pony, a dwarf beside a cavalry charger, and at times it seemed as if the very life would be crushed out of us when we found ourselves jammed in between huge horses and ox-waggons; and here I must remark that the oxen have a nasty habit of prodding out sideways with their horns, to pass the time, so to speak, when on the march. I often wondered what the result would be should my pony become the object of such attentions. Further on along the road, in the inky darkness of the thunderstorm, the silence was suddenly broken by the terrific roar of a line of traction engines appearing on the scene. My pony got on its hind-legs, took fright, and bolted out on the veldt amongst rocks and ant-hills, and it was some time before I could rejoin the column.

At midnight the rain abated somewhat, and we were again all brought to a standstill. A block had occurred on the road, but no information came back as to the cause, nor orders as to what we were to do—whether we were to go to sleep and outspan the

* Such a baggage train, end to end, extended sixteen miles.

animals, or whether we were to continue the march. Therefore the whole column stood for some hours in a state of watchful expectation. Several bodies of troops passed us, light groups of infantry chiefly, having but little equipment. There also marched by the Natal Volunteer Ambulance Corps, 1,400 strong, who had been embodied by Colonel Gallwey, Principal Medical Officer of Natal, with pay at the rate of five shillings a day. These men were enlisted at Durban and Maritzburg, and consisted chiefly of refugees from the Transvaal who had been turned out of that country by the late South African Government. On their journey down they received a certain amount of harsh treatment from the Boer inhabitants of the various towns through which they passed. I saw them now for the first time; they were dressed in ordinary clothes, but the Government had given them a fair amount of equipment, each man having received a couple of blankets, a waterproof sheet, a haversack, and a pair of boots. They carried all their belongings with them, and truly it was a curious sight to see them marching past, four deep, not keeping step nor any kind of military formation, some of them encumbered with small portmanteaus, hand-bags, and various kinds of parcels, their white mackintosh sheets rolled around their shoulders, their haversacks bulging and hung round with bundles of various little odds and ends, including small pots and kettles. These were the men who were to make for themselves a reputation second to none in the Natal Army.*

* The stretcher-bearers did all the hand-carrying work. The corps was divided into four companies, each under the control of

Photo W. W. Robertson.

COLONEL SIR THOMAS GALLWEY.

The rain still kept on, and some of the men lay down in their wet clothes on the wet grass, and were soon snoring in heaps on the wayside, poor fellows! quite fagged out after the last two days' heavy marching. As I rode by the pontoon, which was slung up in sections in different waggons, I saw some —'cuter, perhaps, than the rest—climb up the waggons and get into the great pontoon boats under their tarpaulin coverings for shelter and repose. Eager to be at the front, and afraid of going to sleep on the wayside lest they should be left behind, they at any rate were going to see the business through and get a cheap drive. I almost wished I could do likewise, but duty, and expectation of a further advance at any minute, forbade such a step. For hours we waited, smoking and talking, and it was here that I had my first opportunity of making the acquaintance of that veteran army chaplain of Egyptian and Soudan fame—Father Reginald Collins—an acquaintance which ripened into closer friendship later on, as we were destined to be together throughout General Buller's campaign to the very end. We chatted, while walking our horses about to keep them from chill, and after a while, weary with waiting, we both lay down in our great-coats, amid the slush by the wayside, our horses' reins looped round our spurs to

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two combatant officers (unarmed); each company was again subdivided into sections of six men, each section having its own stretcher and section leader, the latter being picked men and receiving increased pay. When Ladysmith was relieved, this corps was disbanded, as the combatant officers who looked after the companies had to join their regiments in Ladysmith. Most of the stretcher-bearers were re-enlisted into a new corps which was called the Imperial Bearer Corps.

prevent them straying, and thus endeavoured to obtain a rest.

Sleep we had none, for at 4.30 a.m., as dawn was breaking, the column moved on again. It was only then we heard that the stoppage of the column was due to some heavy ammunition-carts having been bogged in a drift, and so tightly were they stuck that three separate teams of oxen had to be yoked together to get them out. Over kopje and veldt, bog and rocks, the march was resumed without a stop until mid-day, when, coming to another spruit near Pretorius Farm, we found the drift of the same name flooded. The indefatigable Engineers were hard at work with pick and shovel, making a road to the waterside; another party of the same corps were throwing a pontoon bridge across the river. The Naval Brigade, cheerful as usual, and smoking their inevitable clays, were hauling over their long needle-like guns, showing the army that the sister service could at times, at any rate, dispense with horses. General Buller, as was his practice whenever obstacles were met with on the march, was standing on the bank over the river, organizing and directing the passage of the transport. Along the riverside the infantry were filling their water-bottles, or lying about in the sun, letting its genial warmth dry their still wet khaki. A group of Connaught Rangers, hard bronzed-faced fellows with grizzly beards, and uniforms stained with stiff work at Colenso, in the historic fight of December 15, were holding forth and laying down the law to an admiring crowd of fresh recruits, who surrounded them with gaping mouths and glistening eyes. Pretorius Farm—a corrugated-metal-roofed house, with a few outhouses—lay on the other side of the river. Here a temporary food depôt had

been formed by the Army Service Corps, and we were enabled to draw some rations—'bully beef,' biscuit, and jam—but were told not to delay in order to eat them for the present, as we were to hurry on to Springfield, where an engagement was hourly expected.

The day was now intolerably warm, and the heat of a tropical sun began to make itself felt by the infantry. The road was inches deep with brick-red-coloured dust, the air full of it, kicked up by marching men and moving animals; it filled our eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, it caked on our perspiring faces, it filled the boots of the infantry, clogging their socks and making them cut through, owing to the friction of the sock on the boot, exposing the bare skin, which then blistered on the leather. The army, indeed, had a general terra-cotta appearance from their dust-like covering. My own mouth and eyes were parched, my nose and cheeks blistered, and grew so painful that I could not bear to touch them. Yet on we had to march, and it was only towards the journey's end that a few men began to fall out of the ranks and rest on the roadside. Some were footsore, others were exhausted from the heat; and a few even showed signs of sunstroke. As I rode by alongside the ambulance-waggons I had to stop and examine each man, and give the bad cases a lift; in fact, nearly all got a lift for a short distance, though room had often to be made for fresh arrivals. However, all got some relief, and even a short rest in comfort under the friendly canvas roof of an ambulance is not to be despised, for a man can loosen his straps and boots, and get, at any rate, time to munch a biscuit or smoke a quiet pipe, both of which a soldier fondly loves.

As we neared Springfield, I had my first opportunity

of seeing the army in full battle array, the cavalry and Mounted Infantry well on ahead scouting, the infantry deploying in long lines across the country on each side of the road as far as the eye could see; the field batteries sedately traversing the open veldt, regardless of rugged ground and ploughed fields. Barbed wire in fences and in long loose coils scattered about in the tall grass bothered them at times; this constant source of annoyance to horses had been thrown about by the enemy in many places. Each mounted party had to be furnished with a pair of wire-clippers to overcome the nuisance.

At 6 p.m. we reached Springfield and halted. As a night attack was expected from the enemy, no tents were allowed to be pitched, and after the evening meal a few of us compared notes round a small camp-fire, hidden away in the rocks to avoid attracting rifle-fire. I then learned that the enemy had been altogether surprised at our advance, and had retired before our troops, only one man being reported killed on our side. Wrapped in my great-coat, I lay down, dead beat, for a few hours' sleep; I was very tired, not having had any repose the night before, and very little on the previous one.

The animals were to be let out to graze until 1 a.m., and were then to be inspanned and prepared to resume the advance or possibly to face a morning fight. The surgeons were specially warned to have everything ready, so we laid out our boxes containing instruments and bandages in anticipation of coming events. This, however, was an unnecessary precaution, as we did not move off until 4 a.m., and the enemy kept at a respectful distance.

At dawn on January 12 we crossed the Little

Tugela, a river of no mean size — 80 yards wide. It had already been crossed the day before by Lord Dundonald and his Cavalry Brigade, who, finding the bridge intact and unoccupied, had left 300 men and two guns to protect it, while he, with 700 men and four guns, had pushed on with his characteristic dash, and seized the important position of Spearman's Hill, which commands Potgeiter's ferry over the Tugela. From this hill he got into helio communication with Ladysmith, so the country on this side of the Tugela, at any rate, was safe. The bridge over the Little Tugela was a fine structure of iron and stone, and it was a wonder to all that the enemy had not destroyed it, and thereby delayed our advance. As I rode over, I little thought of the very different circumstances under which we were destined to recross it later on, as time will show. We marched from 4 a.m. until mid-day, when a halt was made, as is usual, near a stream, so that the men could wash and feed, and the transport animals could water, outspan, and graze. We halted right in front of a nice little farm, unoccupied, the inhabitants having fled at the Boer approach. The marks of the invader met our eyes everywhere — broken furniture, smashed crockery, damaged household goods. That the place had been recently occupied by the enemy was manifest, for the fresh remains of fires, chickens' heads, feathers and bones, old boots, tin cans and ragged clothes, lay about everywhere, reminding one of what is to be seen in country byways at home after a night's occupation by a wandering band of gipsies or tinkers. General Woodgate made the farm the headquarters of his telegraphic staff during the day. After dinner the main body crossed the drift. The ambulances were

put to one side to let the more important units go by.

At last our turn came, and the ambulances crossed in safety, wobbling like huge ships in the breakers, their Red Cross flags bobbing and nodding in the evening breeze, the Kaffir drivers screeching, whistling, and flogging their mules with their long cane sjamboks. The mules themselves were regardless of everything but the presence of water, which they eagerly drank, and, not satisfied even then, would lie down and attempt to roll, making a hideous tangle of their harness, and causing no end of trouble and delay. On the far side of the river there was a high, grassy incline, surmounted by hills. On this the Eleventh Brigade pitched their tents and camped for the night, the Fourth Brigade advancing further to join hands with Dundonald.

About 6 p.m. we heard a loud explosion in the distance, which was evidently due to the enemy blowing up some bridge or other structure ahead. While having a 'wash-down,' the brigade bugler sounded the joyful call of 'Letters,' and there was a rush from all sides and cheers echoing all round the hills as the men made for the postman's tent. What is a more joyful event, or what relieves more delightfully that dreary monotony that we all, at some time or other, are bound to feel while abroad, than the arrival of a letter from home—that little link which binds our hearts to the old country, and is always a ray of sunshine to a soldier in the field?

I had the good luck to get one—my first letter from home after months of waiting and bitter disappointment, owing to changes of address and alterations in the nomenclature of brigades. I tore it open, read it,

and turned it over, and finally re-read it several times, and then gave verbal expression to my objection to the absurdly large modern round-hand penmanship, which occupies so much space on paper, thus curtailing the contents.

That evening General Buller issued a proclamation in Army Orders to be read to the men on parade. The troops were warned not to allow themselves to be deceived by the enemy by means of the white-flag trick. Should a white flag be displayed, it was to mean nothing, unless the force displaying it threw down their arms and held up their hands at the same time. The troops were also to guard against being misled by false words of command or false bugle-sounds, such as the enemy had practised with success earlier in the campaign. Men were not to be surprised by a sudden volley at close quarters: should such occur, there was to be no hesitation: they were not to turn from it, but to rush at it, for such a rush was the road to victory and safety, being the one thing the enemy could not stand, as it brought us to close quarters with them. General Buller also reminded the troops that they were now advancing to the relief of Ladysmith, where, surrounded by superior forces, their comrades had been gallantly defending themselves for the past ten weeks, and that we were fighting, not only in defence of our flag against an enemy who had forced war on us, but also for the health and safety of our comrades in Ladysmith.

By the evening of the 13th all the troops had arrived at Springfield and Spearman's Hill, and supplies of food were well forward. In the meanwhile a dashing little episode was taking place at the Tugela. Six of the South African Light Horse swam the river, and

seized the ferry punt on the opposite side. Some Boers concealed in the rocks opened a brisk fire on the naked men, but could not prevent them from bringing the boat safely to the British side.

The following day General Buller rode out at dawn from the farmhouse at Springfield where he had passed the night, accompanied by only a chosen few, and proceeded to Spearman's Hill, where he spent several hours closely examining the hills on the far side of the Tugela with his telescope.

For two days most of us had a rest in camp, enjoying the luxury of tents. I amused myself during my spare time in interviewing several native chiefs, whose kraals were in the vicinity. One old Zulu, a headman, as I could see from the ring round his head, told me in broken English that the Boers had removed a gun which they had mounted on the hill over the camp before our arrival. He was a fine old warrior, and showed with pride some scars on his side and leg which were the result of wounds received in the last Zulu War. He brought out all his family to be photographed, and did his best to persuade us to drink some Kaffir beer, a sour beverage made from fermenting Kaffir corn. This we declined, even though he assured us that it was a splendid cure for dysentery.

This chief's son lived in the next kraal. He was a tall, well-built Zulu, with a young wife and three children—two girls and a boy. On my asking him which sex he preferred, he pointed to the girls, and explained that he would get a good price for them when marriageable. It is the habit amongst the Kaffir tribes of South Africa to purchase their wives, and I believe no limit is placed to the number each

chief can have, provided he buys them. Twenty oxen, this man told me, was the average price.

I had the pleasure on this occasion of meeting Mr. Frederick Treves, the eminent London surgeon. He was attached to No. 4 Stationary Hospital, which had already spread out its canvas. The little red capes of the army nurses relieved our eyes after the continual sight of nothing but khaki, and seemed a connecting link between the great army roughing it in the field and the nation at home, living, as it might well seem to us, in the lap of luxury.

On January 16 several important movements of troops took place; but before I attempt to describe them I must first remind the reader that our camp at Springfield was in full view of the Boer pickets on the surrounding high hills, and every move in camp could be seen by the enemy. We, in turn, could constantly perceive small scouting-parties of Boers on the eminences, and so each side watched the other. The first move of note happened on the afternoon of the 16th. Lyttelton's Brigade left Spearman's Hill, where they had been encamped, and marched to the Tugela, which they crossed at Potgeiter's Drift, and then seized a small line of kopjes on the other side. The Naval Brigade mounted some guns on Spearman's Hill. Lord Dundonald's cavalry, with the exception of Bethune's Mounted Infantry, were ordered to march at 5.30 p.m. with five days' rations and 150 rounds of ammunition per man, and with only what they stood in—tents, blankets, and waterproof sheets were to be left behind. The camp was to be left standing in full view of the Boer outposts on Spion Kop.

The main body at Springfield received sudden orders to parade at 5.45 p.m. and be prepared for a

night march, all tents to be left in position; we were also told not to take heavy kits, as we would probably be back next day. The men left their great-coats behind. In my innocence I took with me hardly anything, as I thought the less my horse had to carry the less worry I would have; indeed, we all expected to be out for one day, not longer. A company of men from each regiment setting out was to stay behind to protect the camp. These were to bustle about in the morning and show themselves plainly to the enemy on the hills. A few buglers were left behind to blow bugle-calls at the usual hours; others were to light fires; in fact, those who remained were to show as much activity as possible. The result aimed at was to deceive Brother Boer in the morning as he looked from the hills, and make him think the army was still occupying the camp, which in reality the main body had quitted under cover of darkness. It was near dusk when we fell in. Brother Boer on the hills was deceived. He no doubt said, 'Look at the d——d Roineks at their evening drill!' and went to sleep content after his nightly hymn. It was dark when we eventually marched off, and the route followed was so planned as to keep the men in the shadows of the hills. After going for about seven miles, fresh orders were issued, and instead of marching for Spearman's Hill, as we originally expected, we moved off in a totally different direction. As we proceeded, the column was joined by troops from different centres. The night was a glorious one for a night march. A full moon peeped out occasionally through heavy clouds, the atmosphere was fresh and dry, the light just sufficient to show up obstacles, the distant eminences clouded and silent, yet now and then one would

ride into a barbed-wire fence or stumble over an ant-hill.

To one watching the column it was a very picturesque scene: the Royal Artillery, their huge horses, the rattling of their chains, the rumble, rumble of the gun-wheels; the lances of the cavalry; the nodding cocks' feathers in the plumed hats of the South African Light Horse waving in the warm night breeze. Our ambulances jogged along merrily, bumping up and down, the Red Cross flags flapping and fluttering, and the Kaffir boys plying sjamboks and swearing at their companions as one team of mules fouled another. One could write a book about mules and their mulish ways, always ready to kick and stampede on the slightest opportunity, always ready to eat, or to roll in dust, mud, or water.

The column halted. A whispered conversation took place between the leaders; dark, mounted figures, silhouetted against the silvery clouds, galloped up and down the ranks, whispering orders to the officers. Strict silence was to be maintained, as the enemy were near; all pipes were to be extinguished; no matches were to be lit or lights shown; the Kaffir drivers were not to crack their whips nor yell at their teams; no talking was to be allowed. In passing frowning hills and rugged valleys, one now waited in watchful expectancy of a dose of Mauser hail; one imagined posts as men, bushes as guns; a click of a wheel seemed the cocking of a rifle, the thud of a hoof the booming of a gun. The main body came to a halt before dawn; behind, and sheltered by, a ridge of grassy, rocky hills, on which the artillery mounted their guns in the dark, we were told to let the men eat their breakfasts. Our bugler boy, a lad of thirteen, fresh from Aldershot,

hearing the order, started blowing the well-known 'Cook-house' call, as was his wont each morning on receipt of such an order. Fortunately, he was stopped just in time, or the result might have been disastrous to the secrecy of the march. His bugle was taken from him and put out of harm's way.

At dawn the infantry advanced in long lines across the kopjes, and the white canvas hoods were ordered to be removed from the ambulance-waggons, as they were deemed to be too conspicuous. From the hill-tops I had a good view—my first—of the Tugela winding erratically like a huge tortuous snake in its dying agonies through the valley below. Little dots in long extended lines were advancing on Trichardt's Farm near the riverside—these were the infantry; other dots in closer formation, moving more rapidly and appearing larger and darker, were flitting through the scrub—these were the Irregular Cavalry. A few scattered rifle-shots now fell on our ears, then a rattle of musketry. Brother Boer had been drawn at last. Another volley! Was it from the farm? Yes, I was correct; half a dozen men galloped away, pursued by a larger body at close range. I lost sight of them in the trees. It was a party of Boers surprised at their morning meal by some of the Light Horse. The former had fired a volley at 300 yards; our men had replied. No one was hit. A few more 'Pit! pots!'*—long-range Mauser shots—from the opposite bank of the river; one man of the Devons was shot dead by a stray bullet at some 2,000 yards. The enemy had

* The report of discharge of the Mauser rifle has this double note when heard at a distance, whereas the Lee-Metford rifle has but a single note; this difference is, I believe, due to a space existing between the inner and outer coats of the Mauser, which is not present in the other rifle.

crossed, and Trichardt's Drift over the Tugela was in our hands. The artillery now began to shell the other side of the river; scrub, bushes, mealie-fields—all in turn were carefully searched with shrapnel, but with no result: the Boers had fled. The morning sun blazed forth in all its splendour, the doves cooed, the birds sang. Everyone was in the best of spirits; the long-wished-for river was ours.

From the heights over Trichardt's Drift a splendid panoramic view of the Tugela and country north of the river could be obtained. Away on the western horizon, clearly defined against the blue Natal sky, stood out the jagged and fantastic outlines of the Drakensberg, reminding one of the marvellous conglomerate hills of Eastern Bokhara. These mountains, huge in size, some peaked, others flat-topped, others with summits like ruined battlements, all being a series of geological freaks, form an impregnable barrier between the late Orange Free State and Natal.

Stretching from the Drakensberg across our front ran another erratic chain of hills, varying in shape and size, rising in tiers above each other to the north, all barren, rocky, and apparently deserted. This was the Taba Myama ridge.

On the western end of the Taba Myama chain, near Acton Homes, there stands out a spur from the ridge, forming an exceedingly steep, almost precipitous natural fortress, known as Bastion Hill, also called by the troops Childe's* Kopje. On the eastern end of the same ridge there is another buttress-like projection, much higher, much more prominent, and much more

* In commemoration of Major Childe, of the South African Light Horse, who was killed there (see p. 37).

formidable, than Bastion Hill. It lies about five miles north-west of Potgeiter's Drift. A green-topped hill, shaped like a hog's back, its precipitous sides show white glistening spots in the morning's sun—quartz strata. A few isolated, stunted trees are to be seen against the sky-line, appearing like parasites on its huge form; away to the west of the hog's back are its two pointed peaks. This is Spion Kop, a name of Dutch origin, as an old colonial told me, meaning Spy Hill, for it was from its heights that the Boer trekkers had, for the first time, in 1835, gazed upon the fertile plains of Natal. Little did they think then, little did we think now, that it was to be the last resting-place of many hundreds of the white race in the final struggle for supremacy between Briton and Boer.

We now descended to the farm at Trichardt's Drift, which is worthy of description. It was built in the colonial style—a one-storied, airy house, with spacious verandas and numerous corrugated-zinc-roofed out-buildings, surrounded by well-tilled gardens and shaded by lime and apricot trees. There was also an artificial pond, from which a small stream trickled to join the great Tugela, only some eighty yards distant.

When I arrived at the farm I learnt from some Kaffir hands that the owners had left on commando; they had foolishly thrown in their lot with other rebels in the district, and had taken up arms against the soldiers of their Queen. Notwithstanding this, the farm was put under a guard, as is usual, to avoid giving the owners any ground for afterwards stating that pilfering by our troops had taken place in their absence. The interior was well furnished—a walnut piano, on which an officer was playing a popular air,

numerous mahogany chairs and tables, all pointing to recent occupation by a well-to-do family.

Strolling to the river's side, I found the Royal Engineers busy in throwing a pontoon across. The river was about 80 yards wide, and bordered by steep banks covered with sedge, cacti-plants, and bushes. Numerous little birds of a brilliant scarlet plumage were flitting about in the reeds, singing and chattering with all their might. Fish life was also represented, for now and then a sudden dull splash on the smooth surface would betray the presence of some large sleepy denizen of the watery realm. It took twelve pontoon-boats, with their connecting-boards between, to bridge the river; and while this was being done I noticed Sir Redvers Buller sitting on a pile of planks intently watching the proceedings. The infantry got safely and quickly across. Woodgate's and Hart's Brigades advanced to the hills on the north side, which they captured, and then the enemy could be seen retiring northward. The cavalry did not cross by the pontoon, but selected a place about a quarter of a mile lower down, a ford known as Waggon Drift. Across this at noon Dundonald's Brigade made their passage, and a trooper of the 13th Hussars was washed down-stream and drowned. Captain Tremayne, of the same regiment, who gallantly tried to rescue him, was nearly drowned himself, and was carried unconscious to my ambulance-waggon. We had a good hour's work, with artificial respiration, hot drinks and hot bottles, before he opened his eyes, but he made a perfect recovery, and was none the worse for his gallant action.

During the afternoon the Engineers threw a second pontoon across the river, higher up than the other,

Over this the heavy transport, artillery, and waggons passed. During the night of the 17th and the day of the 18th the whole of the waggons belonging to the force were brought across the river, and the artillery placed in position outside Wright's Farm.

Early on the 18th Lord Dundonald's Cavalry Brigade,* which had been augmented by the Royal Dragoons, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, and two squadrons of the 13th Hussars, moved off westward to guard the left flank of the army. Bethune's Mounted Infantry were detached and sent to General Lyttelton at Potgeiter's Drift. Eager to draw first blood, Dundonald's men pushed on for Acton Homes. Keeping behind the small hills which fringed the Tugela on its northern banks, this force almost surprised the right flank of the Boer army. Near Acton Homes some 300 Boers were observed to debouch from the right of their position on Taba Myama and proceed down the Acton Homes road. The two leading squadrons of the Composite Mounted Infantry (Natal Carbineers and Imperial Light Horse) were at once ordered to gallop and seize two kopjes through which the road passed. This they did, and had hardly taken up their positions when the enemy came up the road towards them, with their scouts only a few yards in advance of their main body. If our men had been patient, this force might have been allowed to advance within 20 yards, but a single rifle-shot rang out when they were about 70 yards off, and it was followed by a fusillade. The effect was instan-

* Dundonald's Brigade consisted of: 1st Royal Dragoons (480 strong), 13th Hussars (260), Composite Mounted Infantry (260), South African Light Horse (300), Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry (300), and 4 Colt guns.

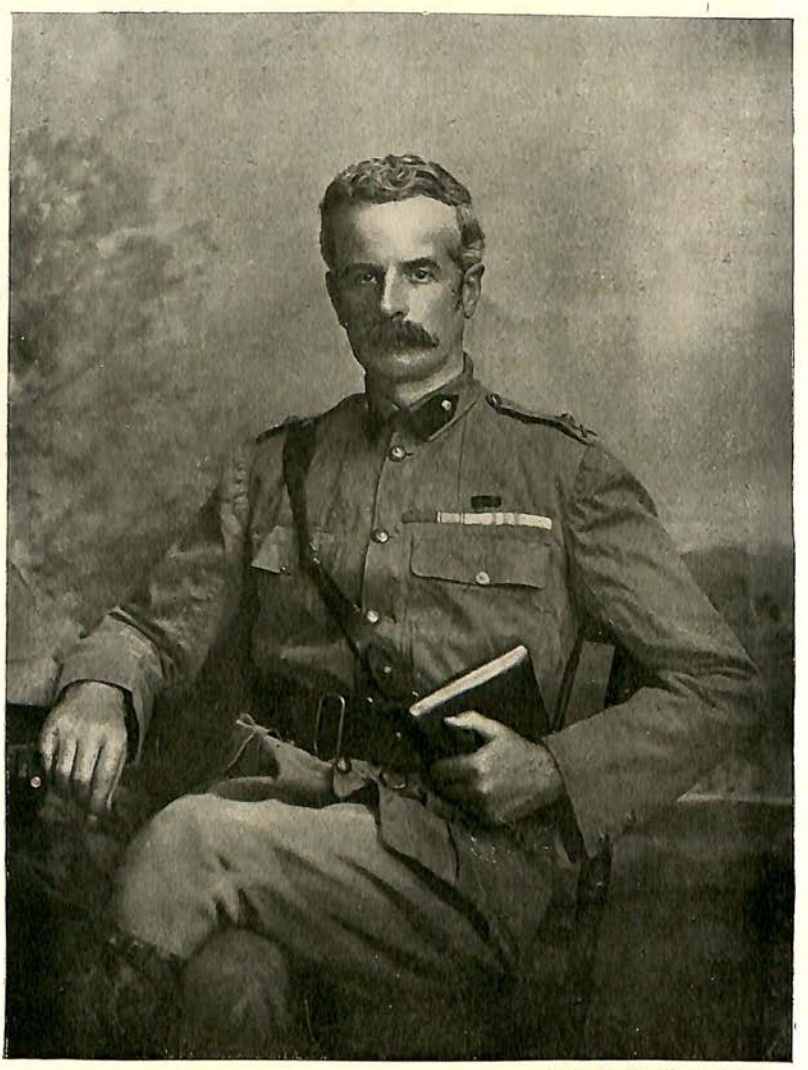


Photo R. Faulkner and Co.

MAJOR-GENERAL THE EARL OF DUNDONALD.

taneous—a sudden halt, many empty saddles, while those who kept their seats faced about and galloped away. Those whose horses had been shot quickly took shelter among the rocks and answered our fire for some time, the Mounted Infantry Company, 2nd King's Royal Rifles, assisted by a squadron of the South African Light Horse, outflanking this party. The Boers, seeing the game was up, surrendered. In this little action about fifty Boers were killed or captured, our loss being small.

Some time that morning a message was sent to Sir Charles Warren that it would be perfectly practicable to come round the range of hills towards Acton Homes, but that it would not be practicable to take the troops down the valley between the small range and the Taba Myama range, as they would be exposed to Boer fire. One or two important places on the line of advance were held by dismounted men left by the brigade, and the force continued its march in the Acton Homes direction.

A request was received by Dundonald's Brigade later in the day from Sir Charles Warren to furnish 500 men at once to prevent his oxen being swept away, as there were no cavalry round the camp, and accordingly the 1st Royal Dragoons were sent back. Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, about 300 strong, had been left on the line of advance at Venter's Spruit to hold some low hills, which it would have been very undesirable to let the enemy occupy. After the successful action at Acton Homes, a strong position was occupied commanding the road which circled up the north-west end of the Taba Myama range on its way to Ladysmith. Finding that the Boers had guns on this road, and as Dundonald had none, Sir Charles

Warren was asked for artillery to knock out the Boer guns which were commanding the advance, and enable an outflanking movement. Reinforcements were also necessary to hold the important position that had been occupied. But the guns were not sent, and the brigade was still further weakened.

Thirty of Dundonald's prisoners were brought to General Warren's camp during the night, or, rather, about 2 o'clock in the morning, as I have cause to remember, for I was called from sleep to attend some of these wounded prisoners.

This incident did not slip my memory, and its record is of interest, for Commandant-General Louis Botha took occasion to refer to it later on in my presence. He stated, as one of the reasons why he would not let the army surgeons remove the wounded off Spion Kop after the engagement of January 24, that the British did not feed or treat his wounded well, and when asked to name any particular occasion he quoted January 18.

I was immediately able to inform him of the inaccuracy of this statement, and told him that I was only one of several other surgeons who attended those men, and that not only were they well fed and their wounds looked after, but many of the soldiers went out of their way to make them as comfortable as possible. However, more of this anon.

I will now briefly summarize the relative position of General Buller's troops on the evening of the 18th.

His right flank, consisting of Lyttelton and Coke's Brigades, with a howitzer battery, were at Potgeiter's Drift.

The heavy naval guns, two 4·7's and eight quick-firing 12-pounders, had been placed on Spearman's

Hill—a position which had the double advantage of commanding the approaches to both Trichardt's and Potgeiter's Drifts.

The main body of troops under General Warren were bivouacked on the north side of the Tugela opposite Trichardt's Drift.

General Buller's left flank extended as far as Acton Homes, being represented there by Lord Dundonald's Cavalry Brigade. Thus, the Boer position, extending from Acton Homes to Potgeiter's, was faced by three bodies of British troops, the movements of each body visible—clearly visible—to the outposts on the central observatory, Spion Kop.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF TABA MYAMA

JANUARY 19–22

Council of War at Venter's Spruit—The Engagement of Venter's Spruit or Taba Myama, January 20—Bastion Hill—Three Tree Hill.

THE plan of operation for the next week's work, terminating on the fatal January 24, requires close attention, and the accompanying map at p. 31 should be constantly referred to.

As before mentioned, Sir Charles Warren received certain instructions from General Buller on January 15, when he marched out from Springfield in command of the whole force, which amounted to an Army Corps (less one brigade). These instructions were to the effect that after the Tugela was crossed at Trichardt's Drift General Warren was to proceed, refusing his right (namely, Spion Kop) and bring his left forward, to gain the open plain north of Spion Kop.

Reference to the above-named map will show that two roads are available from Trichardt's Drift to the plain north of Spion Kop—one by Acton Homes, the other by Fairview and Rosalie. The first-named road, a good one, describes two sides of a triangle before the plain is reached, and was therefore too long; the

second is the more direct route, but a very difficult one for a large number of waggons, unless the enemy were thoroughly cleared out of Spion Kop, which is only a little over a mile distant, and completely commands the road. The circuitous route by Acton Homes was chosen by General Warren, as General Buller in his instructions had recommended that Spion Kop should be avoided.

On January 19 General Warren's turning movement began. His troops left their bivouac at 5 a.m., and went forward in open formation towards Venter's Spruit. Fences and ditches had to be levelled in many places to allow of the advance of the accompanying field-guns and transport, which were in the centre of the broad line formed by our front. At Venter's Spruit a halt was made while a road was being constructed by the Engineers on the slopes of a hill over the spruit, to permit of some guns being brought to the summit. From the top of this hill I obtained a good view of the Taba Myama range, against which we were to advance. This range stretched for some six miles across our front, from Acton Homes on our left to Spion Kop on the right; it is flat-topped, suggesting a sort of tableland. Its slopes rise abruptly from the plain in its entire extent, except near Spion Kop, where a number of small intervening kopjes hide the nature of the ground; the most prominent and largest of these kopjes was called Three Tree Hill, and became of importance later on. Towards the left, or western end of the Taba Myama ridge, a remarkable buttress-like hill known as Bastion Hill stood prominently out. Between this and Three Tree Hill the range is split up by long, serpentine gorges, running in a north-westerly direction.

Below the range lay a flat and fertile plain, meadowed with tall, flowing grass and occasional mealie-fields. Several good farms were also scattered about, surrounded by fruit-trees, the golden tint of the already ripe apricots being clearly visible through our field-glasses.

Two brigades of infantry were sent forward, and occupied the slopes north of Wright's Farm, and soon long-range rifle-fire was drawn from the enemy, who were posted on Three Tree Hill and Taba Myama; through our glasses we could see a good number of their men on Bastion Hill,* some of whom were riding leisurely about, and others industriously digging trenches.

During the firing the baggage had been packed at Venter's Spruit, which was made the headquarters of the main army for the day. In the afternoon our artillery commenced shelling the hills, but failed to draw the enemy's gun-fire. In the meanwhile Dundonald's Brigade, which had been holding the position captured by them on the 18th, near Acton Homes, were calling for reinforcements and artillery. They could not advance without artillery, as they were faced by two long-range Boer guns, one on each side of the road. This brigade now mustered but about 800 men, say 650 rifles. Besides the regiments moved away on the 18th, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry had been recalled on the 19th, to rejoin the Royal Dragoons on the right. The brigade was thus reduced from six to two and a half regiments, and as a brigade was paralyzed, not in energy or dash, but in strength. Little did we guess the advantage they had

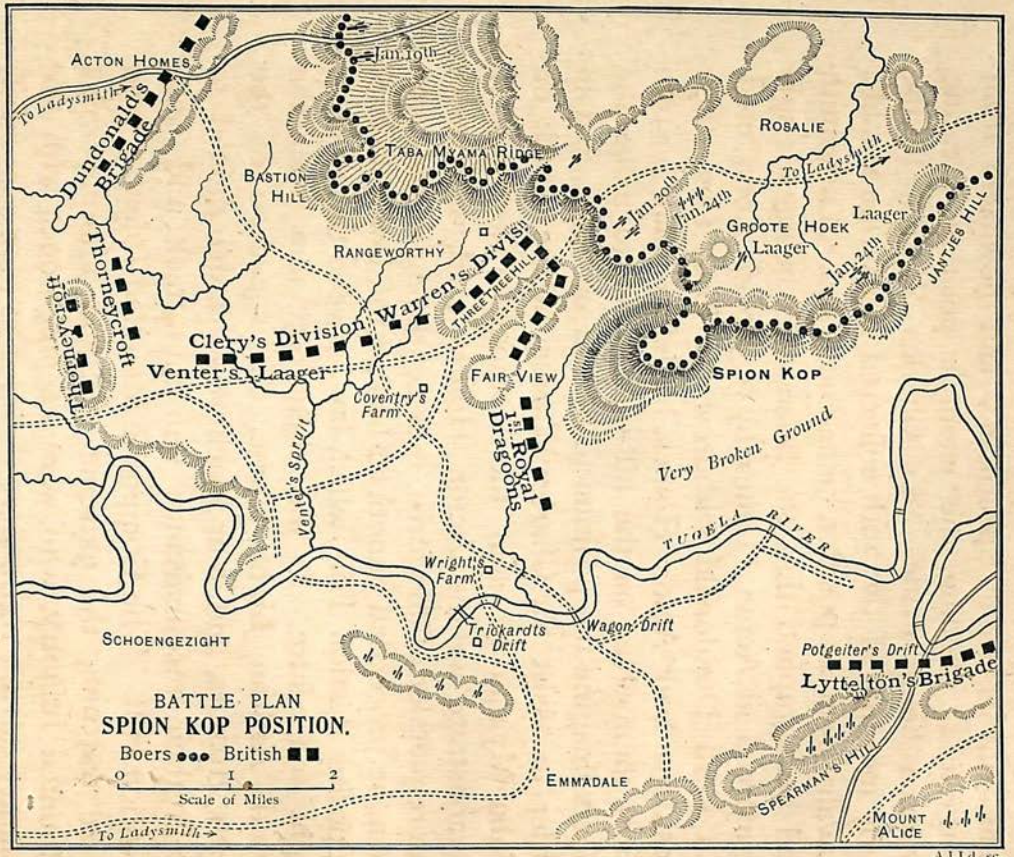
* This hill has also been called Sugar-loaf Hill, Conical Hill, or Childe's Kopje, by various writers.

gained; if luck were ever against an army, it was the Army of Natal, as from hostile sources I afterwards learnt that up to General Buller's arrival at the Tugela, on the 17th, the right wing of the Boer forces numbered not less than 8,000. It held a line of positions overlooking the Tugela from Acton Homes on the west to Vaal Krantz on the east, where it joined the main force at and about Colenso and Ladysmith. Seeing General Buller's move on the 17th, the Boers thought it was a feint to cover a real attack from the direction of Potgeiter's Drift, at which Lyttelton's Brigade had crossed on the 16th, and above which on Spearman's Hill all our long-range guns had been mounted, a movement the enemy did not fail to perceive. These operations, in addition to the fact that the shortest and best road to Ladysmith passed by Potgeiter's Drift, made the enemy mass their greatest strength to face this place, withdrawing their men from all other positions in order to do so. Having done this, it occurred to them that General Buller might come along the Acton Homes road, as such a move would enable him, by stretching out the Boer line, to thereby weaken it, and break through at some point. To avoid this a force with a few long-range guns was sent off to watch Acton Homes; it was this force that came into contact with Dundonald's Brigade on the 18th, and the apprehension entertained by the Boers that General Buller was going to break through their lines at Acton Homes almost became a certainty to them when Dundonald's Brigade drove them out of the pass near that place by occupying a commanding ridge. This ridge was the only position on their right the enemy were afraid of, and, recognising this danger, they reinforced their right flank as soon as possible.

General Warren, having examined, during the 19th, the country through which he had to pass, held a council of war in the evening, and it was decided that the Acton Homes route to Ladysmith was too long, and the more direct route, a road leading north-east, which branches off from a point east of Three Tree Hill, passing over Fairview and through Rosalie, was decided upon.* This latter road being a very difficult one for a large number of waggons, unless the enemy were thoroughly cleared out, General Warren decided that the whole of the transport should be sent back across the Tugela. The march through could then be attempted without impedimenta, with three or four days' food in the men's haversacks. General Warren now decided to adopt special arrangements, which would involve his stay at Venter's Laager for two or three days; to secure his camp he gave General C. F. Clery instructions to attack the Boer positions the next day, by a series of outflanking movements, and placed two infantry brigades and six batteries of artillery at his disposal. During the night General Woodgate's Brigade seized Three Tree Hill, a spot of great importance, being, as it were, a stepping-stone to the crescentic amphitheatre of high, frowning hills which lie between Spion Kop on the east and Bastion Hill on the west.

At daybreak of January 20 the forward movement was at last begun, and on this day the important action known as Venter's Spruit was destined to be fought. As the events of January 24 (Spion Kop) overshadow the week, the important affair just named, which so nearly terminated in a tactical success, has never received full credit, its story being engulfed, as it were,

* See map facing p. 31.


ACTON HOMES
To Ladysmith
Dundonald's Brigade
Jan. 19th
TABA MAMA RIDGE
BASTION HILL
RANGEWORTHY
ROSALIE
To Ladysmith
Jan. 20th
Jan. 24th
GROOTE HOEK
Laager
Laager
Jan. 24th
JANTJES HILL
Thorneycroft
Thorneycroft
Clery's Division
Warren's Division
Venter's Laager
THREETREE HILL
FAIR VIEW
SPION KOP
Coventry's Farm
Venter's sprut
R. Royal Dragoons
Very Broken Ground
TUGELA RIVER
Wrightis Farm
Trickardts Drift
Wagon Drift
SCHOENGEZIGHT
Potgeiter's Drift
Lyttelton's Brigade
BATTLE PLAN
SPION KOP POSITION.
Boers ●●● British ■■
0 1 2
Scale of Miles
EMMADALE
SPEARMAN'S HILL
MOUNT ALICE
To Ladysmith

A.I.Ld. sc.

in the annals of the Majuba-like proceedings at Spion Kop.

The attack opened by all the batteries (7th, 19th, 28th, 63rd, 73rd, 78th Royal Field Artillery and heavy guns, navals from Spearman's and howitzers from Potgeiter's) shelling the enemy's position, accurate practice being made. Sir Charles Warren in the early morning of the 20th collected Lord Dundonald's Cavalry from the position he had occupied. Ladysmith had heliographed that the Boers were being strongly reinforced at Acton Homes by 1,500 or 2,000 men. As Lord Dundonald withdrew his force from their positions near Acton Homes, he left a small post to show themselves on the hill-tops, so as to make the Boers imagine the position to be still occupied, and in order to assist Sir Charles Warren in the attack on Taba Myama he sent the Composite Regiment to demonstrate up the Acton Homes road, while, with the remainder of his force, now consisting of only 500 men, he proceeded unnoticed behind the low hills until opposite Bastion Hill, which lay between the enemy's right and centre. It was about 9.30 a.m. when the South African Light Horse, one squadron of the 13th Hussars, and four machine-guns, determined to push their reconnaisance into an attack and seize Bastion Hill. The Composite Mounted Infantry, who were watching the extreme left, and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, who were keeping touch with the infantry on the right, were directed to give support if, at one o'clock, all was clear in their front.

At ten o'clock Lord Dundonald with the South African Light Horse moved against Bastion Hill, but determined not to press the attack if the Boers were found in force. Two squadrons of this regiment,

under Major Childe, dismounted and made a frontal advance, covered by the fire of two other squadrons under Colonel Byng, within effective range, from a wood about 1,000 yards distant. As the last-named squadrons moved off, one of the enemy's guns, the first that day, opened fire upon them; the shell, bursting within 100 yards of the target, did no damage, owing to the wide open order adopted by the Colonial Cavalry. Ten or eleven shells followed, every one of which fell within 100 yards of their ranks, but, owing to the scattered formation of the men, only two horses were killed. The horses were now placed under cover, and the dismounted men, reaching the wood, opened a long-range rifle-fire on the hill, which was returned from the summit. The machine-guns, three in number, were sent for—the 13th Hussars' Maxim under Lieutenant Clutterbuck, one of Lord Dundonald's 'galloping' Colts under Captain Hill, M.P., and the South African Light Horse Maxim, all under Major Villiers. These were fetched up to the wood by Lieutenant Winston Churchill, S.A.L.H., and immediately opened fire on the sky-line at 2,000 yards. Their noise attracted the attention of the Boer gunners to the westward, and shell after shell from the enemy dropped with remarkable accuracy into the wood where the horses of the 13th Hussars were taking cover; one was killed here by a shell that failed to explode. As these horses were being galloped off to better cover, another shell fell within a yard of the leader, a moving target at 7,000 yards showing the accuracy of the enemy's fire.

In the meanwhile the two attacking squadrons were climbing Bastion Hill. Owing to its precipitous nature there was a considerable extent of dead ground, which rendered the upward advance easy. Corporal Tobin,

of the South African Light Horse, arrived at the summit ten minutes in advance of his comrades or any others. He waved his ostrich-plumed felt hat on the top of his rifle as a signal to the machine-guns in the wood below to divert their fire from the summit. It was a grand sight, this khaki-clad trooper, all alone on the summit, waving his ostrich-plumed hat to urge his comrades to follow; and it is pathetic to record that this man, whose bravery is mentioned in General Buller's despatches, met his death on the following day on this same hill.

As the South African Light Horse took the hill —which proved to be a position of great importance, for by our holding it the Boers were prevented from bringing a gun on to it, as they were about to do, and if they had succeeded would have enfiladed the whole of the infantry advance—Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry and the rest of the 13th Hussars galloped up in support. In the meanwhile the infantry had advanced to the attack on the enemy's centre. General Clery disposed his troops as follows: General Hildyard, with the Queen's East Surrey, West Surrey, and West Yorks, was on the left (next Lord Dundonald's Brigade); General Hart's Irish Brigade — Dublin Fusiliers, Inniskilling Fusiliers, Connaught Rangers, and Border Regiment—occupied the centre; while the Lancashire Brigade, under General Woodgate, consisting of York and Lancaster, Lancashire Fusiliers, Royal Lancasters and South Lancashires, were on the right. Of the actual attacking party, only two of the regiments in the last-named brigade formed part—the Lancashire Fusiliers and the York and Lancaster Regiment, who were lent from the Eleventh Brigade to Major-General Hart, commanding the Fifth Brigade.

At daybreak General Hart advanced up the long spur of the Taba Myama ridge, which runs from Coventry's Farm northwards, and halted under cover some 2,500 yards from the enemy's trenches. General Hart selected the two Lancashire battalions for the firing line. The Lancashire Fusiliers were placed on the right, and the York and Lancaster Regiment on the left, the line of separation being indicated by a clump of bushes among some rocks. A donga was to mark the extreme right line of advance for the Lancashire Fusiliers. Two companies of the latter, when extended, fitted into the allotted space, and when the extension was completed Colonel Bloomfield, who commanded this regiment, received orders from General Hart to bring both the companies up to the bushes on the left, and occupy the rocks there. A movement to the left was necessary to effect this, and while it was being carried out the two companies came under a severe fire at about 1,500 yards range. Six or seven casualties occurred as they crossed a patch of white flowers, which was evidently a range mark to the enemy. The result of this movement was that, while about 100 of the Lancashire Fusiliers could use their rifles, about 800 more were unable to fire, and offered an excellent target to the enemy, who did not neglect their opportunity. The Lancashire Fusiliers' casualty roll for the day was seven officers wounded, eighteen non-commissioned officers and men killed, and between eighty and ninety wounded. Notwithstanding their awkward position, the admirable demeanour of the men is worth recording. The officers' mess servants and company cooks got breakfast ready at the rendezvous, and brought it up to the firing line in the most light-hearted and

unconcerned manner, regardless of the heavy fire they must endure.

General Hart's second line consisted of the Border Regiment and Dublin Fusiliers, with the Connaughts and Inniskillings in reserve. General Hildyard's Brigade was placed between Lord Dundonald's Brigade on the extreme left flank and General Hart's Brigade on the right. Hildyard's firing line comprised the Queen's. As the infantry slowly picked their way up the ridge, taking whatever cover they could, the enemy opened a long-range rifle discharge from the whole length of their position. This was soon followed by their artillery, but, though their marksmanship was excellent, many of the shells failed to burst. Two high-velocity guns and some pom-poms were brought into action by the Boers. One of their first shrapnel shells accounted for half a dozen or more of our men. Our Field Artillery,* who had been in action on Three Tree Hill since 10.20 a.m., redoubled their efforts. Their view was obscured in front by the face of the Taba Myama ridge, the average range of which was 2,600 yards from this. Only some of the enemy's trenches were visible, the majority being behind the sky-line, and the fine effect of their shells could only be gauged by information signalled back by the attacking infantry when any particular spot was shelled, and the enemy's rifle-fire slackened as the result. If the Boer fire became too hot from any particular place, the artillery turned their attention to it, and this mutual co-operation between both arms undoubtedly had good effects. Owing to the fact that signalling had been

* The 7th, 63rd, 73rd, and 78th Batteries Royal Field Artillery. The 61st Howitzer Battery also came up later. The 19th and 28th Batteries were brought up, but afterwards moved to the left.

done away with in the Horse and Field Artillery shortly before the commencement of the war, signallers had now to be borrowed from the infantry, which handicapped the gunners, and unfortunately caused delay. Meanwhile our guns fired incessantly, the men working at high pressure all along the line.

About 3 p.m. the troops under General Hart, harassed by the uncomfortable nature of their position, determined to clear the enemy from their right. As the Irish and Lancashire men burst forth with a mighty shout to clear the crest, they were met by a tremendous fire from the ridges behind. The front line lost heavily, and a similar fate would have befallen the second had they not been stopped in time, for it was found that behind the first crest lay 1,000 yards of tableland, from the north of which rose a second ridge, crescent in shape, and not before visible from any part of the British position. From this ridge, which completely commanded the plateau, the enemy poured a murderous fire—shrapnel and rifle—and it seemed at one time that General Hart's men must be annihilated; but the batteries on Three Tree Hill came to their assistance, and turned all their energy on what, to them, was at any rate an invisible target. The ground in front of the advance became a whirlwind of dust as the shrapnel rained upon it. To harass our troops still more, the enemy set fire to the grass, which, being dry and long, blazed furiously, sending up dense volumes of smoke, through which friend and foe emptied their magazines. Some of the wounded suffered in the flames.

The enemy now turned their whole attention to the infantry along the crest line, directing a most accurate fire on all who showed themselves on the plateau.

It was well for our troops that the majority of them could not be seen, but the continuous swish of bullets passing overhead forbade any further advance. Most of the enemy's shells either failed to burst or passed over into the valley; otherwise the casualty list would have been much heavier, for many of the gorges under the steep crest were literally packed with the battalions who were acting as supports. Fortunately, these were not visible to the enemy. That they suspected their presence, however, was manifest by the careful and systematic way in which the Boer guns searched the reverse slopes of the ridge. It was while this was taking place that one of the most pathetic incidents of the day occurred. The enemy's guns had begun to shell Bastion Hill. The first few shells went over its summit, and skimmed into the valley below without doing any harm; the next—a percussion shell—burst on the summit: the gunners had now found their range. This was soon followed by a time shrapnel, which exploded accurately just behind the British position on the crest. It was a searcher. The Boer gunner could not possibly see anyone here from his post; he merely used his best judgment, and fired on chance, but he succeeded. Major Childe, of the South African Light Horse, who led the party which took the hill earlier in the day, was sitting, partly sheltered by the rocks, on this dangerous ground, and was instantly killed by a fragment, which entered his brain. Half a dozen troopers of his regiment, who were close to him, were seriously wounded.* Privates J. Burgess,

* Major Childe's curious presentiment of impending death may be added to many other well-attested examples. It is recorded that he discussed it with his brother officers on the night before, requesting as a word-play upon his own name that the inscription, 'Is it well

H. Maddox, A. Penfold, and J. Phister (all stretcher-bearers of the Queen's), with Major Hind, R.A.M.C., gallantly volunteered to ascend Bastion Hill and bring down the body of Major Childe. On the plateau they were exposed to a heavy fire.*

During the afternoon General Lyttelton's force at Potgeiter's Drift made an effective demonstration against the enemy's position facing them. Here a large force of Boers lay entrenched on the slopes of Spion Kop and its eastern continuation, Brakfontein. General Lyttelton's plan was directed to retain the enemy in their positions here, and to hinder them from reinforcing the Boers on Taba Myama, thereby materially assisting General Warren. The 61st Howitzer Battery and the naval guns covered the infantry advance, and Bethune's Mounted Infantry reconnoitred down the Tugela on the east, to protect their right flank. Reaching Skiet Drift, they found the enemy in force. General Lyttelton's infantry, having come within 1,500 yards of the enemy's trenches, opened long firing; but as their orders were to effect nothing but a reconnaissance, they retired later with two killed and fifteen wounded.

The Eleventh Brigade headquarters had during the day been with the artillery on Three Tree Hill. The Royal Lancaster and South Lancashire Regiments acted as escort to the field-guns; the Eleventh Brigade bearer company had its ambulance-waggons drawn

with the child? It is well' (2 Kings iv. 26) should be placed over his grave. This was done, and to-day there stands a little wooden cross at the foot of Bastion Hill—the hill he took and held—bearing this very epitaph.

* Mentioned for gallantry in Sir Charles Warren's despatch, February 1, 1900.

up under the crest. From this point we had an excellent view of the engagement, which was particularly interesting, being to most of us our baptism of fire. When our artillery commenced shelling the Boer trenches on the Taba Myama ridge, which was less than 2,000 yards distant, the shells were invisible till they exploded. We could see them tearing great holes in the hillside, and sending up clouds of red dust when they burst from the ground. When time shrapnel was used, it exploded some 20 feet in air, over the target aimed at; all one could see was a flash, not always visible except against a dark background, or as a small convoluting globe of pure white smoke. If the ground under the 'cone of dispersion' of the shrapnel bullets is visible, little clouds of dust thrown up by the individual pellets as they strike the soil can be perceived. The shells went through the air with a scream that reminded me of rockets, and it was possible to calculate the range at which they burst by timing the interval between the report of discharge from the gun and the bursting report. The artillery practice was very accurate, and the coolness of the gunners, standing by their guns with absolutely no cover, was admirable, although they were subjected during all the afternoon to a continuous long-range rifle and shell fire, which must have been very trying.

Luckily no casualties of any moment occurred here, and as there was a surplus of surgeons, I had but little to do, and was able to watch the infantry attack. As General Hart's left advanced from the valley up the southern slopes of the Taba Myama, inclining to their left — that is, towards Bastion Hill — skirmishers went out, and soon a general engagement commenced. General Hart's main body

had massed on the reverse slopes of the last-named hill, and very quickly his Maxims went into action —rat-tat-tat-tat-tat! They made fine music, the report being totally different from that of the rifles, although the ammunition is exactly similar to that used in our Lee-Metford weapons. The sounds follow in rapid and regular succession as the trigger of the gun is pressed. All along the sky-line we could see the ragged outline of Boer sangars (stone walls thrown up as fortifications), and in many places long red mounds, which indicated the presence of trenches. The aspect of the troops massed on the slopes was that of a great body of ants, large and small, the latter being men, the former animals and vehicles; for some ammunition mules, Maxim mules, and even ambulances, had climbed up. Outside the main body the specks grew thinner and thinner, and in the firing line they became invisible, except at times, when a thin, scattered line of khaki-coloured specks, almost particles, might be seen springing into sight from some cover, then flitting rapidly forward, and disappearing with the same rapidity as they threw themselves prone on the ground to recommence firing. 'Tommy' had gained at Colenso, on December 15, valuable experience, which he had not been slow to turn to advantage. He was now learning to dodge behind available cover as if to the manner born. But, being of the attacking party, this did not equalize matters, as he had at times to expose himself while advancing, whereas the Boer could lie content and in safety in a well-constructed trench, or behind a sangar or a rock, where even shrapnel could not harm him. Each time these infantry became visible, it was possible through field-glasses to distinguish the dust thrown up in little clouds

all round them as the enemy's bullets struck the ground.

Very soon I noticed other specks, solitary ones and slightly larger, moving out. My glasses showed these to be stretcher-bearers, who had their work cut out for them on that hill. Throughout the day these stretcher-bearers, the majority of whom were the civilians mentioned in the last chapter, excited the utmost admiration and praise. They went forward, solidly and unflinchingly, to the very firing line, and could be seen bending over the fallen, tending and removing the wounded with a devotion so faithful and a coolness so superb, amidst a hail of bullets and shells, that unfortunately many paid dearly for their self-sacrifice.* The Boers fired on them without the least hesitation; either they could not or would not see the Red Cross brassard worn on their left arm. From experience gathered later on at Spion Kop, on the 25th, to which reference will be subsequently made, I have come to the conclusion that the Red Cross, which is a small one, fitting into a circle of an inch and a half in diameter, could not be seen by the enemy at the range within which these men were shot down, and it may have been difficult to recognise a khaki-coloured stretcher. Had each stretcher-party carried a Red Cross flag on a lance, I am quite certain, from the opinion I formed of Louis Botha and his men on the 25th, that no such 'accidents' would have occurred.

Shortly afterwards I had to attend to several men who had been wounded close by me. The first case was that of a man shot through the chest, just half an inch from his heart—a close shave. I dressed him, gave him a little brandy, and wrote out a surgical

* Six reported as killed, and twelve wounded, on this occasion.

tally,* which I fastened to a button on his tunic, and sent him on to Major Moir's Hospital. He afterwards recovered. There were several others to whom I attended, injured in many different ways, but all very cheerful, smoking their pipes and indifferent to their wounds. One young fellow had been struck by a long-range Mauser bullet in the chest, directly over the heart. He had been temporarily stunned by the force of the blow, but on recovering consciousness inquisitively felt the wound with his fingers while I cut up his shirt with my scissors. Before I could prevent him he had reached the bullet and pulled it out. Luckily, it was a spent bullet, and had not penetrated far, for the wound was but half an inch deep. That missile he kept as a trophy. Another man was carried in on a stretcher; he was rolling about and in great pain. I asked him where he was hit; he said in his liver, and pointed to the wrong side of his body. I opened his tunic, and found his wound had been dressed—'by a chum,' he said. He had a wound right enough, but it was not that which was giving him his agony: this was a safety-pin which his devoted friend, in his anxiety to fasten the bandage, had actually fixed in the *skin* of the poor fellow's left side!

After awhile, Major Winter, my Commanding Officer, sent me with four ambulance-waggons to remove some wounded from our firing line, on the summit of Three

* Every surgeon carries a note-book with perforated pages that tear out. The page, being mounted on linen, can either be buttoned on the wounded man's tunic by a slit at one end or pinned on. Written on this are the wounded man's name, number, rank, regiment, nature and degree of wound, and treatment adopted. I found such labels of great convenience during the pressure of a general engagement; and as one can tell at a glance whether a case has been already seen by a surgeon, much time is thus saved.

A TYPICAL BOER CAMP.

Boer photo.

Tree Hill. The road was a very bad and steep one, and it took sixteen mules all their energy to get each waggon up. Our artillery and their escort were on the summit, firing at the enemy on the opposite ridge, and drawing their fire, as they were in full view; around the guns the infantry were lying, and it was here that the wounded were awaiting removal. The road to the top ascended the side of the hill in full view of the enemy's trenches, not more than 2,000 yards away; before it reached the summit it took a zigzag turn behind the crest, by which it was protected to a certain extent. Getting all four ambulance waggons into line, we made a dash across the open and up the side of the hill. Many bullets were whistling overhead, all high and stray shots. Had the Boers wished, they could have shot down all our mules with the greatest ease as we slowly ascended the hill, but they must have seen the Red Cross flags fluttering on our ambulances and respected them. I thought at the time that their fire actually became more subdued as we passed up that road.

When we arrived at the summit, behind the crest of which I drew up the waggons, perceiving it was the centre of the enemy's fire—a perfect hail of bullets whistling over—I observed the infantry escort of the guns variously occupied. Some, those on the crest, were firing their rifles from behind lightly-constructed sangars; others, lying below the crest in the blazing sun, were playing cards, smoking, and chaffing each other. Occasionally one would rise and walk up to the crest line, and, though warned, recklessly expose himself to the full view of the enemy, for no other reason than to see what was going on. In this way several men were 'picked off' by the Boer sharp-

shooters. I saw a sergeant walk up with a canteen of tea in his hand; while standing up there, open to the aim of hostile marksmen, not 2,000 yards away, he was shot through his stomach when in the act of finishing his drink. This unfortunate man died that evening.

The enemy now began to shell Three Tree Hill, and I received my first real taste of shell-fire, which I did not in the least relish, especially the screeching whir-z-z! of a shell—the hissing sound of the last two letters of the word I use to represent the noise becoming intensified as the missile approaches. As the sound increases, so does the moral effect on the hearer; at least, this was my experience of artillery at that time, to which from henceforth I decided to accord profound respect. Several of these shells fell right in the thick of the troops; failing to burst, they did no damage: one, however, did so, killing one man and wounding about half a dozen. Just before this incident a circumstance occurred which perhaps led up to it. Somebody had put up a hare, which ran right through the infantry. This was trying 'Tommy' too far; he could sit and shelter for most things, but a chase he could not resist. Nearly a hundred men jumped up and went after that hare, hallooing, throwing stones, sticks, 'bully' beef tins, and even their helmets, after it, regardless of all danger. As it passed within 12 feet of where I was standing beside my pony, I knew it was safe, and felt glad when I saw it disappear from view down the hill.

Having filled the four ambulance-waggons with wounded, we made our way back to the bearer company's dressing-station. The gauntlet had to be run again—down the hill this time. As the waggons

emerged leisurely into the fire zone, the first, alongside which I was riding, had its axle damaged by a shell which burst underneath. Luckily, the axle was not broken, so we whipped up the mules, released the brakes, and went down that road like a 'chute,' arriving safely at the bottom. In a recess near a stream at the back of Three Tree Hill stood one solitary tent: it was the operating tent of the Eleventh Brigade bearer company. Here the cases had their wounds examined, to see if the dressings were in place. The wounded were given bovril, coffee, and something to eat; the badly injured got stimulants or hypodermic injections of morphia, if they required it. No operations were attempted here, owing to the very close proximity to the battlefield of the Eleventh Brigade Field Hospital, under Major Moir. Major Moir had commandeered the entire buildings of the deserted spacious homestead known as Coventry's Farm on the 19th, and had set up his full complement of tents in the surrounding grounds. It was to this hospital that I brought my cases, and I found the surgeons extremely busy, as General Hart's wounded were also arriving at the time.

It was now about 5 p.m., and the engagement was in progress, the Boer guns on the left still firing. At 6 p.m. the fire slackened, only to start again at 6.15 p.m. with renewed energy, and continuing till nightfall. Since General Hart's assault had been countermanded, as before mentioned, his troops had merely held the positions gained, and contented themselves with long-range shooting. Towards evening General Hildyard extended his left, and drove back a small Boer force which threatened his left flank. At nightfall he sent one of his battalions—the Queen's

—to relieve the South African Light Horse on Bastion Hill, and thus enable them to descend to their horses, which had been left in the plain.

At 7.30 p.m., darkness setting in put an end to the day's battle, and the infantry bivouacked on the ground they had won. The result of the day's fighting was not satisfactory, for although we were in possession of the enemy's front-line, it was of little value, seeing that the Boers held a still more strongly entrenched line beyond, with a comparatively flat country between our force and theirs. It is quite possible that they allowed us to obtain the footing we had won, for they must have seen that it would be impossible for us to bring our artillery into position so long as they held our right in check, while they would now have a safer and better opportunity of using their own guns.

The casualties in General Warren's force from their arrival at Trichardt's Drift to the evening of the 20th were: 34 killed, 293 wounded, and 2 missing. The majority of these occurred on the 20th, mainly in the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Border Regiment, the York and Lancaster Regiment, and the Dublin Fusiliers. The Lancashire Fusiliers had 18 killed and 89 wounded amongst the men, and the following officers wounded: Captains O. Wolley-Dod, J. N. Whyte, H. V. S. Ormond, R. B. Blunt; Lieutenants D. Campbell, E. J. Barrett, M. G. Crofton. The Dublin Fusiliers lost Captain Hensley, an officer greatly beloved; he had fought at Dundee, at Farquhar's Farm, and at Colenso in the earlier stages of the war.

With the first streaks of daylight on Sunday, the 21st, hostilities were resumed. Like the sound of splitting ice, volley after volley burst forth from the Boer ridge on General Hart's men. Our artillery—

six batteries—now joined in, which roused us all from our bivouacs, in time to see General Hildyard's on the move. Three of his battalions were already in advance, and one, for which at present there was no room, was held in support under a flat-topped kopje. General Hildyard's plan appeared to be as follows: To the east of Bastion Hill there ran a deep 're-entrant,' which seemed to split the centre of the enemy's position from their right. Into this General Hildyard was going to wedge his infantry, and cut the Boer position in two. Over the black plain, the grass of which had been burnt the day before, stream the three battalions, their khaki visible against the dark ground; another blast of musketry, and a shell or two, and figures fall; but the rush is not for a moment checked; a charge, a scuffle, and the ridge is reached, and a portion of it is British property. But this is of little use; another ridge, with an intervening plateau some 1,200 yards wide, is now seen for the first time. It is the Boer main position, and is immensely strong. To reach this, the third Boer line of defence, that glacis-like plateau, must be crossed. It is commanded by the heights, with their lines of low rock and earth redoubts, and trenches carefully prepared with overhead cover, so placed as to command all approaches with converging fire, and here and there with a cross-fire. The enemy knew what they were about when they let the British army plant its foot on Taba Myama ridge. They fully recognised the enormous strength of the positions behind it, on which they could fall back. Their General, Louis Botha, had spent his boyhood on the Tugela, had hunted buck on those very hills, and was now reaping the benefit of the knowledge he had then had oppor-

tunity to gain, and had not failed to grasp; while the British did not possess even a survey map of this, their own colony, but had to cut their way to knowledge—with their bayonets. Two ridges had already been won with loss of life, a third confronted us, and no one knew how many more might rise in the dozen miles between us and Ladysmith. Yet the infantry did not lose heart. Some officers of the Queen's and West Yorks called for volunteers, and with fixed bayonets this gallant band tried to rush that distant ridge. As they passed from their recently-won crest line over that naked plateau, they were greeted by a deadly hail of Mauser bullets, followed by a steady roll of fire. The rush was disastrous; it could not succeed. More than half of that gallant band never returned alive; the remainder were too few to effect their purpose. Yet the attempt was made, and 'Tommy' of the line was the 'Tommy' he has always been: he had followed his officer to the jaws of death.

Several cases of conspicuous gallantry which occurred at this period of the day are worthy of record. Lieutenant A. M. Boyall,* of the Queen's, conducted a patrol to within 500 yards of the Boer trenches, to examine the ground for an advance. Out of sixteen men he had only one killed and two wounded, although exposed all day to the full view of the enemy on open ground on a grass slope. His conduct showed exceptional coolness and intelligence. Private J. Morant,† of the same regiment, carried back a message from Lieutenant Boyall under very heavy fire, and was

* Mentioned for gallantry in Sir Charles Warren's despatch, February 1, 1900.

† Mentioned for gallantry in Sir Charles Warren's despatch, February 1, 1900, and in General Buller's despatch, March 30, 1900.

wounded. Private Powell,* of the Queen's, twice carried water to wounded men lying out in the open under similar circumstances. Colour-Sergeant Kingsley, of the same regiment, when his company was unexpectedly caught by a very severe cross-fire which wounded both his officers, showed coolness and intelligence in withdrawing his men steadily to cover, and gallantry in bringing his Captain to a place of shelter when mortally wounded. Sir Charles Warren recommended this non-commissioned officer for the medal for distinguished conduct in the field. Lieutenant H. W. Smith,* of the 2nd Queen's, who had advanced to a donga in front of the Boer position, after being shot through the chest (the bullet coming out through his back), continued to lead his men until he fell exhausted, and then took cover above the donga till 3 p.m., when he contrived to get into it. He remained there with one man till dark, after his company had been relieved, and had sufficient strength to walk almost to hospital, having set his soldiers a splendid example of coolness, courage, and endurance.

That such cases of devotion as I have described should be appreciated at their proper value is made evident when I state that many of the wounded who lay out, exposed in the open, were shot at, and hit, over and over again by the enemy in attempting to drag their maimed and exhausted frames to cover.

I have since learned from Boer sources that on this day three of the Boer scouts—Roos, Felchtkimp, and Hinton†—managed to get on a ridge near Acton Homes, which had been captured from Botha the day

* Mentioned for gallantry in Sir Charles Warren's despatch, February 1, 1900.

† 'Jack' Hinton afterwards gained notoriety as a train-wrecker.

before, and plant the Transvaal flag on the summit. The nature of the ground was such that few or many in number would have been equally hidden, and for a long time these three men diverted the fire of the British guns from a spot where Major Wolmerans was erecting a protection for a pom-pom on the top of another high spur; when they were satisfied that their tactics had achieved their object, they succeeded in regaining their lines. Had we known that in the interval this position was practically defenceless, it would have been stormed and taken, and it is highly probable that the two Boer guns would have been captured; and had the ridge been seized at that moment, the right wing of the Boer Army would have been in a precarious situation, for any force that had taken it could have also taken the pass near Acton Homes, from which they could have outflanked the enemy on Taba Myama, which in turn enfiladed Spion Kop. As it was, Boer reinforcements having come up from Colenso and other places, the fight continued at Acton Homes on the 22nd and 23rd, many of their men having been withdrawn from Spion Kop to that place. Their Acton Homes position seemed to them of great value, because they still expected that General Buller would try to force his way at that spot, and thought that he had abandoned the idea of breaking through elsewhere.

In the meanwhile Lord Dundonald's cavalry were guarding the left flank; later on, however, it became apparent that the enemy were massing in this quarter; they were evidently becoming more afraid of a turning movement from the direction of Acton Homes. By General Buller's desire General Warren moved two of his field batteries from the British right to give additional support to the troops on the left, and, as

he found it impossible to proceed without howitzers, he telegraphed for four from the 61st Battery, at Potgeiter's. These guns, however, did not come up until next morning. The two field batteries arriving at our left flank acted in conjunction with the cavalry, but found it impossible to reach the enemy's long-range guns, which outranged them; it was also impossible to advance to close quarters, as they would then have been within rifle range. When General Hildyard's men captured the ridge already referred to, these batteries were unable to take advantage of the situation, the ascent to the Taba Myama being too precipitous.

Mr. Churchill* records an incident that occurred on the left flank, which is instructive as contrasting the adeptness of the colonial compared with the regular in taking cover. Captain Stewart's† squadron of the South African Light Horse dismounted, held an advanced kopje all day long under a sharp fire, and never lost a man. Two hundred yards back was another kopje, held by two companies of regular infantry, under equal fire. The infantry had more than twenty men hit.

The casualties for the 21st amounted to 24 killed, 223 wounded, and 4 missing, General Hildyard's Brigade bearing the heaviest loss. An example of the erratic nature of the long-range gun-fire of the enemy may be here recorded. A Major of the Royal Engineers, who had gone to see a patient in Major Moir's Field Hospital, was killed by a shell which had

* 'London to Ladysmith.'

† Captain Stewart, after the relief of Ladysmith, commanded the Composite Mounted Infantry, and did good work in Lord Dundonald's Brigade during General Buller's final advance through the Transvaal.

travelled right over the Taba Myama ridge, and exploded beside the hospital.

As before, at the first glint of dawn on the 22nd rifle-fire commenced. The preceding night was occupied by both sides entrenching; now and again rifle-fire created alarms, for sometimes in the darkness the smallest sound will set a position ablaze with spluttering flame. As soon as light allowed, the guns which the enemy had mounted on their right the evening before, and which had been brought up with reinforcements from Spion Kop, set to work. Though they made most accurate shooting with their shell-fire, the slopes, behind which our men were taking cover, like flies on the side of a wall, were luckily too steep for effective results. Shortly after a fresh gun and a pom-pom chimed in from another invisible position on the Boer right. Four of the guns of the 61st Howitzer Battery, under Major Gordon, R.A., which had been telegraphed for from Potgeiter's Drift by General Warren, came up early in the morning. General Buller, arriving about the same time, directed General Warren to place two of them on the left, two having already been placed on the right flank. The howitzers frightened the enemy considerably, but could not range their guns. As the large 50-pound lyddite shells burst on the opposite ridge, throwing up great clouds of red dust, mixed with their dark brown or canary yellow fumes, according as this explosive detonated completely or otherwise, the Boers could be seen running from place to place to escape the effects of the missiles. Neither the howitzers nor the 15-pound field-guns could reach the enemy, and there were no long-range naval guns available.

General Warren held a consultation with the Commander-in-Chief after his arrival, and pointed out the

difficulties which would attend a march accompanied by waggons along the road leading past Fairview, unless Spion Kop, which lay about 2,000 yards away, and commanded the track, were first taken. General Buller agreed to this, and it now became evident that this high mountain on our right, known as Intawanyama or Spion Kop, was the key of the Boer position, and whoever held this hill held the command of both roads to Ladysmith. General Warren accordingly summoned the Generals to a council of war. Three alternatives presented themselves: The first, a risky one, and one that might involve a heavy casualty list, was to assault, by a frontal attack, the present Boer position on the crest by moonlight; the second was to withdraw beyond the Tugela, and look elsewhere for another crossing; the third, which was resolved upon afterwards, was to attack Spion Kop by night, rush the Boer trenches with the bayonet, entrench and enfilade the Boer position during the day, and drag up guns by night. The problems to be solved would be, whether the troops could hold this hill for the day; whether it could be entrenched against the enemy's shell and rifle fire; and, lastly, whether guns could be brought to its summit during the following night. The answers to these questions are now historical.

The result of the council of war was that Major-General Talbot Coke, whose brigade (the Tenth) had joined the main force from Potgeiter's during the day, was directed by Sir Charles Warren to occupy Spion Kop that night, and orders were drawn up giving the necessary instructions. General Coke requested that the occupation might be deferred for a day, in order that he might make a reconnaissance with the officers commanding battalions to be sent there.*

* Sir Charles Warren's despatches, January 29, 1900.

It was also suggested by Colonel Thorneycroft* (whose Mounted Infantry, on account of their local knowledge, had been selected to supply a detachment to the attacking force) that the attack should be postponed until a thorough reconnaissance of the hill had been made. 'That evening,' says Dr. Conan Doyle,† 'there came a telegram to London which left the whole Empire in a hush of anticipation. Spion Kop was to be attacked that night.' This telegram, we see, was not correct. Nothing of further interest occurred during the day. It is said that still further reinforcements of the enemy moved from Spion Kop to strengthen their right flank, as Botha still thought that General Buller would come by Acton Homes.

During the afternoon I was told off in charge of a convoy of nearly 200 wounded, which I brought safely to the Tugela, where I handed them over to Major Milward and Lieutenant Houghton, R.A.M.C. I also acted as postman for a number of officers and men who wished to send letters back for the English mail. At Trichardt's Drift we met a large body of civilian stretcher-bearers in charge of Lieutenant Tyrell, of the 15th Lancers. The latter shared with me a tin of condensed milk (which we diluted with water), and in return I shared with him my ration biscuits; such was our dinner. Owing to the more protected dispositions of our troops under cover on Taba Myama during this day, and from the fact that no further frontal attack was made, they suffered comparatively slight losses. Not more than forty casualties occurred, the 1st Border Regiment heading the list with sixteen.

* 'Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry on Spion Kop,' L. Oppenheim, *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1901.

† 'The Great Boer War,' A. Conan Doyle.

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CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF SPION KOP

JANUARY 23–25

The Night Attack on Spion Kop—The Engagement on the Plateau and on the Twin Peaks—The Return across the Tugela.

THE operations of which I am now about to treat are probably more interesting than any others undertaken in the campaign, and have formed the text for all sorts of comments and articles, favourable or otherwise. Many foolish things have been written and spoken about Spion Kop by 'arm-chair critics,'

> 'Who never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle know,
> More than a spinster.'

It is not my present purpose to participate in these disputes, though perhaps better informed on the matter than some who have done so; rather do I intend to deliver 'a round unvarnished tale' of what I saw and noted at the time, when 'Tommy' of the line and his colonial *confrères* upheld their reputation as 'an old and haughty nation proud in arms' while contending with a stubborn foe under almost insurmountable difficulties.

On the morning of January 23 the Commander-

in-Chief had an interview with Sir Charles Warren, who was in charge of the force, and assented to the proposed attack on Spion Kop. He suggested that General Woodgate should be placed in command of the attacking party, and detailed Lieutenant-Colonel A'Court, of the Headquarter Staff, to accompany General Woodgate as Staff Officer.

General Warren, together with some of his staff, went out early to reconnoitre Spion Kop. Two ways were seen to lead to the summit, one on its south-west face, and one on its south-eastern from the direction of Trichardt's Drift. The former was visible to the enemy; the latter, not being exposed either to the view or fire of the Boers, appeared to the General the more suitable.

At mid-day Major-General Sir E. Woodgate sent for Colonel Bloomfield, who commanded the Lancashire Fusiliers, and told him that Spion Kop was to be taken that night, and, as he 'must have tried troops' for such a hazardous operation, he had determined that the Lancashire Fusiliers should lead the way. At 3.40 p.m. the following orders were issued by the Brigade Major of the Eleventh Brigade:

'1. The G.O.C. has decided to seize Spion Kop this night.

'2. The following troops will compose the force:

'Royal Lancaster Regiment (6 companies).

'2nd Lancashire Fusiliers.

'Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, 180 men.

'Half Company of 37th Company R.E.

'3. The above troops will rendezvous at White's Farm, about ½ mile N.E. of Pontoon Bridge, at 7 p.m.

'4. Extra ammunition will be carried on the mules supplied by the 10th Brigade.

'5. One day's complete rations will be carried. Waggons with supplies of great-coats will be brought up as soon as possible without exposure; also water-carts and machine guns.

'6. The South Lancashire Regiment will hand over six mules, three to each battalion, for water-carrying purposes.

'7. Pack mules will be utilized for carrying water in waterproof sheets.

'8. Twenty picks and twenty shovels to be carried in regulation stretchers.

'9. Password, "*Waterloo.*"'

With regard to these orders, No. 3 was modified later, the rendezvous being changed to a spot north of White's Farm. Order No. 7 was found impracticable, waterproof sheets being useless as water-bags; accordingly, biscuit-tins were tried as improvised tanks. They were not a success, as, owing to the steep nature of the hill, the tins were tilted to all sorts of angles, and no water reached the summit but that in the men's water-bottles. A little was brought up next day.

General Warren's original plan, as before stated, was that the attack should be made from the south-eastern slopes. But as late as seven o'clock that evening General Woodgate announced that he had decided to attack Spion Kop from its other side—that is, from the south-western aspect. Colonel Thorneycroft, immediately on hearing of this change of plan, rode on ahead, made a sketch, and took bearings as full as the very brief African twilight allowed, of the landmarks and best route by which to ascend the hill.

The south-western slope of Spion Kop presents the following characteristics: From base to summit it is in all places steep, and may be divided into thirds for the purposes of description. Three humps first catch the eye; the first is surmounted by two trees, the second by a cluster of about half a dozen more, and the third hump forms the 'hog-back'-shaped

summit. The ground at the base is broken by dongas and rocks; from this a number of Kaffir paths lead to several kraals, which are situated at the junction of the lower and middle third of the hill; two dongas lie to the right of these, and one on the left. From the Kaffir kraals the ascent becomes very steep and rough, owing to the presence of huge boulders. Above this the first hump is met with, its two trees growing on a little plateau with a hollow on their left. The second hump now begins; the ascent is again steep and rocky; its summit passes upwards as a green, sloping glacis, at the upper end of which is the small belt of trees. From these trees the third hump rises, and is devoid of cover—no rocks, no vegetation, nothing but red clay, caked hard in the sun, and small pebbles on the surface. This third hump, while forming the summit of the hog's back, is not the actual summit of Spion Kop—a fact the troops subsequently learnt to their cost.

The rendezvous where the troops assembled was a long rocky ravine at the north of White's Farm. This glen led to the base of Spion Kop, and was near General Warren's main camp. Here the column was joined by some additional troops, two companies of the South Lancashire Regiment having been detailed as reinforcements. During the halt the officers explained the dangers to be avoided in the ascent. The men were warned not to talk, no pipes were to be lit, nor were any kind of lights permitted. Should the enemy attack them, bayonets alone were to be used; on no account was rifle-fire allowable without orders.

There was some discussion as to who should lead the column, and finally Colonel Thorneycroft, who appears to have been one of a few, if not the only

one present, who had seen both the eastern and western sides of this unknown mountain, was selected for the very difficult and responsible position of taking this force of 1,600 men up an unknown mountain in the dark, along an ill-marked sheep-path—a path which in many parts was extremely dangerous from its proximity to precipitous, rocky declivities, in some places even cliffs, on both sides of the south-western slopes. It is said that two native guides were appointed to accompany the column, but one bolted and the other was incompetent.

Each regiment of the attacking force brought with it its own medical officer. The medical officer of a battalion is equipped with two panniers, one containing splints, bandages, and instruments; the other holding medicines, stimulants, and a reserve of comforts, such as Bovril, etc. The order of march was thus arranged: Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry (18 officers and 180 men); the Lancashire Fusiliers; the Royal Lancaster Regiment (six companies); the South Lancashire Regiment (two companies); Royal Engineers (half of the 37th Company); mules, etc.

The column started a little after half-past ten, Colonel Thorneycroft, assisted by Lieutenant Farquhar and Lieutenant Gordon Forbes, leading. The Lancashire Fusiliers, with General Woodgate at their head, rifle in hand—all the officers carried rifles—formed the advance-guard for the first half-mile. A halt was then made, and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry was sent ahead. The night was extremely dark, though the stars gave a faint light whenever the drizzling rain permitted.

The column moved on again, across the valley, along an ill-defined track—so narrow was it that

movement in single file, and frequent halts to allow the sections to close up, were necessary. At the bottom of the hill another halt was made to await the scouts' report that all was clear, as there was nothing but the dim, vague outline of the mountain to guide the stumbling steps of the troops. Here the skill and resource of Colonel Thorneycroft showed to advantage. Occasionally he would halt his men and go on with a chosen band (Lieutenants Farquhar and Gordon Forbes and Privates Shaw and Macadam) for 100 or 200 yards to feel the way, and then come back and lead the column forward.

About midnight the kraals were reached. Above these the hill rises abruptly, and the difficulty was increased by the presence of a heavy mist. The two trees on the plateau of the second hump were next reached, then the steep, rugged rocks. Never were orders of a night attack better obeyed; yet the noise of the men's nailed boots on the rocks must have awakened any Boer, had the wind not been in our favour. Slowly but surely they clambered up. Nothing was now visible save the glowing embers of the fires of the British camp in the valley, and the 'dash-dot' twinkle from a signaller's lamp on Three Tree Hill, saying that all was well below. In many places here the men had to go on all fours, and constant delays were unavoidable in order to prevent men getting lost, although the formation of 'double files' was kept as far as practicable.

The second hump, with its belt of trees, was next reached—barely visible, so thick had the fog become. Here the leading files halted, and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry extended as far as the ground permitted, in such a way as to draw a complete cordon

around any outlying Boer picket. The Lancashire Fusiliers were now in four successive lines, or double companies, with 100 yards or so between each, the men in single rank. Several more halts were necessary owing to the mist, lest any error should occur in the direction taken by the advance line, or lest the column should be made the target of a flank fire from any of the enemy's outposts—a most disagreeable event in a night attack.

As the false crest of the hill was attained, almost the whole of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry had extended along it; behind them came their supports, and the other regiments in long lines, following. Not a sound was to be heard save the faint grating of boot-soles on the hard ground, now that the rocks were passed, and the occasional yelp of a dog below in the Kaffir kraals. Hereabouts a large white spaniel bounded up in the dark—whence it came no one knew; for the moment discovery seemed certain, but the creature allowed itself to be caught quietly by one of the men.

Suddenly, as Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry were within some twenty yards below the sky-line, a hoarse guttural voice from their left front shouting, 'Wi kom dar?' twice, in quick succession, came with startling emphasis. Some say it was a Kaffir sentry, others a Boer; but so clear was the challenge that everyone near the head of the column heard it. Obedient to the orders previously issued, every man threw himself flat on the ground. It was well they did so, for a second later a whole picket of some twenty Boers fired rapidly, their rifles flashing irregularly in the inky darkness. The discharge lasted but a few minutes, and as the clicking of the bolts of the Mauser weapons

told the anxious listeners that the enemy were refilling their magazines, the order 'Charge!' was given. As the whole front-line surged forward with a cheer, one officer, an athlete—Lieutenant Awdry, of the Lancashire Fusiliers—out-distanced the rest. Cold steel was too much—the Boers broke cover and fled; not, however, before Lieutenant Awdry had bayoneted a burly Dutchman in a trench, and a few others were killed in the mêlée, as they scampered through the rocks. Excepting these, the whole Boer picket, numbering seventy-five men of the Vryheid commando, got away along the mountain-tops—some of them evidently in their stocking-feet, for boots were found left behind—by paths and tracks they knew by heart from their three weeks' residence on the hill.

It had been arranged that when the summit was in our hands a signal by lantern was to be sent to camp; but this being impossible, owing to the density of the fog, three resounding cheers were given instead, and these brought the news to the anxious watchers below at 4 a.m. Immediately the British batteries on Three Tree Hill woke all the camp as their guns belched forth. They had been trained the evening before on the whole length of the Boer position facing this hill, the very site of our field-guns having been marked, and these being now worked in the dark by means of clinometers, it was hoped that by searching the reverse slopes of the Boer position with their fire they would prevent reinforcements being sent up to the point of attack.

It was now almost dawn, and the troops on the summit set about entrenching. The dense fog, hitherto the friend of the attacking party, now became

their deadliest foe, for it was impossible to see in what direction the trenches should be made in order to face the enemy. Time, however, could not be lost, as it was impossible to see what positions commanded a field of fire; the utmost that could be done was to fortify what appeared—or, rather, what was *felt*—to be the crest line. A trace was laid down by the Royal Engineers, men got to work with picks and shovels, and what rocks and clumps of earth could be found were placed along the trace. The ground was so hard and rocky that pick and shovel were of little avail, and what stuff could be collected was of the scantiest and poorest material—a spadeful of earth here and there. This trench, when dawn broke forty minutes later,* measured from end to end about 200 yards; at its left or western end it was slightly curved. The protection it afforded, while fairly sufficient from rifle-fire in front, was utterly inadequate to shelter men from flank fire or any kind of shells. It faced what was thought to be the Boer position.

General Woodgate had placed his troops, in reference to this trench, as follows: The Lancashire Fusiliers were given the right; Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry occupied the centre, the left centre, and obtuse angle; and the Royal Lancasters and South Lancashires the left. The exact situation of the companies of the Lancashire Fusiliers from right to left—or, roughly, from south-east to north-west—was C, F, A and G Companies, then Thorneycroft's. In rear of these, in a sort of rough echelon from the left, came B, D, E and H as supports to the forward companies. The troops, as soon as they had been allotted sections of the

* About 4.40 a.m.

defence, proceeded to improve their positions as best they could.

As dawn began to break, a mounted Boer—some say a Kaffir—rode up to within a few yards of our men at work to join his picket. While the soldiers ran for their rifles he discovered his mistake, and made off, followed by a few harmless shots.

Sentries were now pushed forward to avoid any further interruption, and some Boer ponies were taken. The enemy had by this time recognised the gravity of their position, and General Botha had received the report of our arrival on Spion Kop. He hastily collected his men under cover of the fog, and got reinforcements and big guns up from Acton Homes, posting them silently on the back of Green Hill, the eastern knuckle of the Taba Myama ridge, which lies north-west of Spion Kop, without disclosing their movements to the British.

Our scouts, who had pushed forward along the ridge, found that while the position occupied by our troops was the highest part of the plateau, it in no way commanded the ascent on the Boer side, as this side broke off precipitously 180 yards lower down. While the Royal Engineers were busy improving the meagre entrenchments, the heavy mist began to clear. It was now half-past seven o'clock, and immediately the fog-like curtain rolled off the summit, exposing our troops to the full view of the enemy. The Boers opened a heavy fire; so severe was it that our working party and outposts were forced to stop work, and take what cover they could on the barren plateau. Following this outburst of rifle-fire three guns and a pom-pom opened from cuttings under cover on the north-western slope of Green Hill, at a range of not

more than 3,000 yards. Another pom-pom opened from the north-east of the Spion Kop plateau.

The position of the troops and the nature of the hill were now for the first time apparent. The British were in the centre of a plateau some 900 yards broad by 500 yards long; 180 yards in front of their hastily-formed entrenchments was an indefinite rolling crest, with absolutely no cover; in front of this, the ground, in the form of a barren glacis, swept down; at the bottom was a steep ravine, with a small conical kopje on its far side, 800 yards off. The sides of the glacis and the ravine were too steep to allow of any movement of the enemy below being seen; in fact, the Boers were able to creep up to within 50 yards of the troops under cover of dead ground, quite invisible until they lifted their heads above the kloof.

Towards the east, a long, narrow neck, with cliffs on its southern side, faced our plateau, and an easy incline on the northern or Boer side, which we could not see, and which permitted easy movement of their artillery, connected the plain with two peaks—the Twin Peaks, as they have been called—of the mountain proper. These peaks, being higher than the plateau, command it, and, being at right angles, enfilade it. They more or less face Potgeiter's Drift over the Tugela, from which they ascend almost precipitously, and are continuous with a low range of hills on the east, known as the Brakfontein range.

To the north-west or left of Spion Kop plateau, almost in line with the Twin Peaks, and thus again at right angles to our position, lies the Taba Myama ridge. The western or terminal kopje is called Green Hill, a position of some importance, being strongly fortified with trenches and gun emplacements. These

were constructed by the enemy some days before, not, as some writers have said, to command Spion Kop, but rather to prevent the approach of any force along the Fairview and Rosalie Road from Trichardt's Drift. Green Hill is separated from the Spion Kop plateau by a deep kloof, affording much dead-ground cover from any fire directed from the centre of the plain or from any part of Three Tree Hill.

Thus it can be seen that our troops in the middle of the Spion Kop plateau were liable to attack from three sides, viz., from their front, their right front, and their left front. They were also liable to receive gun and rifle enfilade fire on both their flanks, as well as on their front. We shall now see what they had actually to sustain, and how they bore it.

From the time the Boers first opened fire it had become evident that the long trench which had been constructed in the dark afforded no view of the enemy, thus offering no proper advantage to the troops which occupied it. Another attempt was therefore made to occupy the opposite crest, from which the sappers and their escort had been driven. From Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry a party, under Captain Bettington and Lieutenant Grenfell, were sent to the left, and another, under Captains Petre and Knox-Gore and Lieutenant F. Ellis, to the left front; and some companies of the Lancashire Fusiliers to the right front, and of the Royal Lancaster Regiment to the right. Boers could here be seen about 3,000 yards away, coming up the northern slopes of Spion Kop; this body of men belonged to the Carolina commando. They were some 500 strong, and were led by Commandant Prinsloo, a very able officer, who had been ordered by General Schalk Burger to retake the hill.

SPION KOP, NATAL.

Infantry are on Mount Alice. Tugela in valley. Taba Myama on left, Plateau and Twin Peaks centre, Brakfontein on right

From photo by J. E. MIDDLEBROOK, Durban.

At the same time the Heidelberg commando had been sent to reinforce their comrades on Green Hill.

About 8.30 a.m. Colonel Bloomfield, who had noticed another large party of the enemy coming along a path, reported the fact to General Woodgate. The General came up to the spot where Colonel Bloomfield had been on the look-out, and while they were watching the path General Woodgate was mortally wounded in the head above the right eye. The command of the troops on the hill now devolved on Colonel Crofton, of the Royal Lancaster Regiment, he being the senior officer present. Colonel Bloomfield, having told him what had happened, asked if he had any special orders for the Lancashire Fusiliers, to which he answered that he (Colonel Crofton) should signal down to say that they were 'hard pressed and needed reinforcements.'

The Boer rifle and shell fire now became more intense, as they had by this time got all their guns into position, causing considerable discomfiture to the troops on the plateau by a cross-fire. The position of the enemy's guns was as follows: General Schalk Burger, who was in command of the Boer left, holding the ridge formed by the Twin Peaks, had two big guns behind the north-east peak and a pom-pom behind the north-west peak; the Boer centre, which was occupied by General Louis Botha, and which was south of Coventry's Farm, had one gun and a pom-pom; behind and to the west of Green Hill, which formed the enemy's left, were two more pieces.* It is said that four of these guns were part of the capture made from us at Colenso on December 15, and that a Creusot 94-pounder was in action on the north-west. The

* Ascertained from reliable Boer sources.

naval guns on Gun Hill by Trichardt's Drift answered, but so well were the hostile guns masked that our gunners could not possibly see them, and so good was their cover that our shells either fell short or passed over them. The enemy's rifle-fire at this time was chiefly directed against the plateau from Green Hill at the north-west, from the hump at the north, from the Twin Peaks and the slopes which stretch towards Brakfontein on the east—that is, from our left front, front, right, and right rear.

By nine o'clock some of the Boers had reached the rocks which fringed the summit of the steep kloof at the north end of the plateau. They had crept up unobserved under cover of the dead ground, and were being rapidly reinforced, especially about our right front. At the same time our firing line was suffering, and fresh troops were doubling forward as opportunity allowed. One section of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, under Lieutenants Hill-Trevor and MacCorquodale (the latter officer had only joined his regiment from England in the darkness of the night before), were on the left-front crest line; this entire section and both officers were wiped out. On the left of these was another section of the same regiment, under Lieutenant Grenfell; this officer, who had been shot in the leg and again in the arm, was about to get his wounds bandaged by Sergeant Just, when another bullet struck him in the head and killed him. Sergeant Just was struck by a shell in his side.* A sergeant of the Royal Engineers was seen lying beside two dead soldiers; Colonel Bloomfield noticed that his canteen was glittering in the sun, and possibly drawing fire: he told him to put it out of sight. Receiving no answer,

* From the *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, by permission.

he found that this unfortunate man had been hit by a shell, which had touched his spine and completely paralyzed him.

General Woodgate, since receiving the wound in his head, which afterwards proved mortal, had been removed to the dressing-station on the south end of the plateau. While here, he ordered the following message to be heliographed to General Warren: 'We are between a terrible cross-fire, and can barely hold our own. Water is badly needed. Help us.' The heliograph as this message was being sent was struck by a shell and smashed; the signaller, however, gallantly continued, and finished it by means of his flags.

Somewhere about ten o'clock Lieutenant Sargeant, I.S.C. (attached to Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry), led a sortie with twenty of his company to obtain a lodgment on some rocks on the right front of the ridge, this spot at the time being unoccupied by our men. It was gained, and only just in time, for some of the enemy had reached it. It is told in the T.M.I.* that a certain Private Bradford had just reached a rock, and had cautiously pushed his rifle over it preparatory to raising his head to aim; it struck something soft, and in his excitement the rifle went off. The soft substance was the waistcoat of a Boer, who was simultaneously putting up his rifle to fire from the same rock. In this object he failed, as he was unintentionally shot dead. Lieutenant Sargeant's party found it impossible to hold their rocks for any time; almost immediately some of the enemy had crept round his right, enfilading our men in such a way that they had to retire to the trench with a loss of half their number. The Boers at once occupied this position, and brought a heavy enfilade

* From the *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, by permission.

fire to bear on the rest of the crest line. Colonel Thorneycroft, who was in the trench, seeing this, ordered all the men surrounding him—some twenty of his own regiment and another twenty of the Lancashire Fusiliers—to charge. He led them himself. On the left of the crest line three officers were firing alone, and around them were the bodies of their own men, dead, dying, and wounded. One of them was Captain Knox-Gore; the second, Lieutenant Flower Ellis; the third, Lieutenant Newnham. The last-named had propped himself up against a rock, for he had been wounded in two places, and was bleeding to death. As he continued firing, a third bullet killed him.

As Colonel Thorneycroft and his gallant band of forty men rushed by, Knox-Gore stood up and shouted something inaudible in the uproar, and pointed to his right; he was immediately shot dead. Lieutenant Ellis still continued firing, but was never afterwards seen alive. As the attacking party surged forward they were nearly all shot down; Colonel Thorneycroft, stumbling, sprained his ankle and fell. It was thought at the moment that he was dead, but he urged his men forward as he lay. An officer of the Lancashire Fusiliers headed another party out; he was hit and fell dead. Lieutenant Wade, of the Royal Lancasters, hastened to take his place, and was killed by his side. Lieutenant Nixon of the same regiment went out to fetch Wade, thinking he was wounded, and was himself shot through the arm, and nearly bled to death, the main artery being severed. This officer's wound I afterwards dressed myself. Major Ross, of the Royal Lancaster Regiment, was also slain.* Lieutenant-

* Poor Major Ross was a great exponent of the game of draughts; I had many a game with him on board the transport *Dilwara* on

Colonel Bloomfield was severely injured, and was carried back to the trench in a most gallant manner by Major Tidswell and Sergeant Lightfoot of his regiment.

At about 10.30 a.m. it is stated* that Colonel Crofton, who had taken the General's place, gave the following to the Signalling Officer, Captain Martin (Royal Lancaster Regiment): 'General Woodgate killed; reinforcements urgently needed.' This wording of a message, which correctly described the situation, though in error as regards General Woodgate's condition, is certified both by Colonel Crofton and by Captain Martin themselves. It was not written down owing to the exigencies of the moment, and was apparently altered in transmission; for the above was not the wording of the message which General Warren is said to have received, which was as follows: 'Reinforce at once, or all lost. General dead.' A similar missive is said to have been sent to headquarters. Sir Charles Warren sent the following reply to Colonel Crofton: 'I am sending two battalions, and the Imperial Light Infantry are on their way up. You must hold on to the last. No surrender.' General Warren immediately ordered General Coke to proceed to Colonel Crofton's assistance, and to take command of the troops. He started at once, and brought the 2nd Middlesex and 2nd Dorset Regiments with him.

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our passage out. It appears that he was considered too ill (being laid up with dysentery) to join his regiment in the march up on the night of the 23rd, but somehow or other he slipped out unawares, and, though hardly able to walk, climbed the hill and reached the firing line of that fire-swept plateau on the morning of the 25th.

* 'With Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry on Spion Kop,' by L. Oppenheim, *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1901. (By permission.)

General Buller was watching the engagement at the signalling-station at Spearman's when Colonel Crofton's message arrived; he read it, and at that moment he could see that our men on the top had given way, and that efforts were being made to rally them. He accordingly telegraphed to General Warren: 'Unless you put some really good hard fighting man in command on the top, you will lose the hill. I suggest Thorneycroft.' General Warren accordingly heliographed to Spion Kop: 'With the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, I place Lieutenant-Colonel Thorneycroft in command of the summit with the local rank of Brigadier-General.' From the hour Colonel Thorneycroft was appointed Brigadier-General in command of the top, until 10.30 p.m., when Lieutenant Winston Churchill brought up a note, no message of any kind reached him from General Warren.

General Warren's order was received by Colonel Thorneycroft about a quarter to twelve, under the following circumstances: He was lying, disabled from his sprained ankle, surrounded by his men, firing at a range of 150 yards on the enemy, who were on their left front. A man ran up with the message, and as he commenced to speak was shot dead through the head, and fell across the Colonel with his errand unfulfilled. A few minutes later Lieutenant Rose, of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, crept up, and from cover of a rock shouted through the din: 'Sir C. Warren has heliographed to say you are in command. You are a General!' He also added that the right was hard pressed, and that he had seen reinforcements coming up the hill.

The state of affairs at this time was extremely critical. The enemy were occupying part of the crest

line, 150 yards away; on the left they were to some extent held in check by the remnants of Captain Petre's men, who had been driven back to some rocks midway between it and our main trench. The Boer artillery were raking the little plateau by their cross-fire. Colonel Thorneycroft sent Lieutenant Rose to order the first of the reinforcements to go to the right. This happened to be the Imperial Light Infantry, a regiment 700 strong, made up of Colonists and Imperial refugees from the Transvaal and Orange Free State, recruited chiefly at Durban and Maritzburg. These had arrived on the first shoulder of Spion Kop about 10 a.m., where they had received orders to remain until required; but even here a good many spent bullets reached them. At 10.30 F and H Companies received orders to support the firing line on the plateau; they had not yet been under fire, and as they pushed on many a poor fellow was laid low, but the others never flinched. Reinforcements were badly needed, and these men, many of whom on their way to Natal had suffered those insults from the Transvaal inhabitants at the various stations which were recorded in our daily papers at the time of Kruger's famous ultimatum, were now eager to wipe them out. On reaching the firing line they were sent to the right.

At noon the din was terrific, the roaring of the guns on both sides completely silencing the reports of smaller weapons. Now and again, however, during a momentary pause, it was possible to make out the barking pom-pom-pom-pom-pom of the Vickers-Maxim or the tat-tat-tat-tat of the smaller Maxim. It is recorded that the uproar was so great that Colonel Crofton, of the Royal Lancasters, failing to make an

order to advance heard by some of the troops at a critical moment, a bugler boy of the 'King's Own,' hearing the order, promptly grasped the situation, and took the initiative on the impulse of the moment, and, standing up, sounded the advance, which, being clearly audible above the din, had the desired effect: the whole company immediately rushed the crest.

About noon I noticed a curious spectacle, the details of which I have never been able to fathom. I was lying among some rocks, which afforded good shelter, and were fairly comfortable, notwithstanding the abominable stench of some dead animals, which had been killed by shell-fire some days ago, and during a temporary lull in my duties was scanning the plateau with my field-glasses. I had a good view of both the northern and south-western slopes that led to it, as well as of the level ground itself. Suddenly there was an increase of rifle-fire, and I noticed some of our men on the southern end of the plateau charge forward to the northern end. Then what seemed a huge body of men—our men, for I could see their helmets—stood up on the summit and moved as a body to the north, some running, others walking—almost, it seemed, leisurely. A terrific discharge was poured on these; the whole eminence seemed a smoking, seething inferno of bursting shells. I could see men falling like corn to a reaping machine, for a moment; then smoke and dust thrown up by the bursting missiles obscured everything but their flashes. This continued for a short time, then partly cleared, and I observed a large body of men, whether British or Boers I could not distinguish, rush down the northern slope, which was behind the plateau.

I thought the enemy's position had been carried,

but saw no more, as at this moment I received an order from Major Winter, R.A.M.C., respecting the removal of some wounded, which necessitated my going to the foot of the hill. On the way I met several stretcher-parties carrying awful burdens; one man had had both his legs shattered by a shell, and hæmorrhage was coming on. I managed to comfort him somewhat, put on a couple of tourniquets, and sent him on to the field hospital. As we went on to the hill, we met many similar cases, nearly all the results of shell-fire, and all too hideous to describe. At length we came to a deep, rocky spruit bed, with a little stream trickling down below. As the ambulances had been unable to cross this, they had waited on the side nearest the field hospital, and I sent a 'memo' back to Major Winter, asking for what surgical instruments, bandages, splints, and stimulants, I thought would be sufficient; I also asked for some spare men, including a cook. As the path crossing the bed of this spruit was the chief means of communication between the main army and the troops on Spion Kop, and as the ambulances of the Tenth Brigade (Captain Martin) and the Eleventh Brigade (Major Winter) could ply to and from their brigade hospitals to their side of the drift, I considered this the most suitable place available for a dressing-station. Accordingly, I selected a small hillock on the Spion Kop side with a cutting behind it, affording, as I thought, safe shelter from fire. But as all the stray shells and bullets that missed Spion Kop kept dropping about us, I moved further on, selecting a pass more directly under the hill, and along which ran the only path to or from the plateau. This pass was overhung by steep clay banks, on the top of which I

fixed up a Red Cross flag. Cases now began to pour down from the hill on stretchers, and I soon ran short of my first supply of bandages; I sent to Major Winter for a new supply, which came up together with three men, one of whom was a cook, who brought some Bovril and other comforts for the sick. He lit a fire under the bank of my pass, which faced the hill. Suddenly the Boers made us their target, and three bullets went into the fire, scattering the sticks. Fortunately, at the time the cook was talking to me at some distance from the fire, and so the bullets went clear of us. I have reason to believe that this discharge was not drawn by the Red Cross flag, but was due to some infantry who strolled over to see what we were doing, and whom I promptly ordered away. A few moments after the enemy dropped five pom-pom shells in quick succession close by, but they fell short and did no harm. This sort of thing went on around us for the rest of the day, but we did our dressings under cover of the bank. From this time onward the wounded came through my dressing-station, as the pass was the only exit from the hill. I thus saw every case, some of them being mutilated beyond description. About one-third had been seen and bandaged by the regimental surgeons or by some of our stretcher-bearers under Captain Kelly, R.A.M.C., and these, of course, had only to be glanced at to see that the bandages were still in position and that bleeding had stopped. Others, poor lads! had got some comrades to bandage up their wounds, or had done it themselves; in some cases the men used their putties, for, as is often the case in the hurry of a fight on a hot day, the men take off their khaki jackets and throw them aside, and forget them as they advance. This is an impor-

tant loss, for every soldier has a little pocket in the lower corner of his tunic, in which he carries a packet called the first field dressing, which comprises a roller bandage, a pad of gauze, another of wool, a piece of jaconet waterproof, and two safety-pins, together with a calico card on which are inscribed his name, number, regiment, and next-of-kin; therefore, if these are lost, it may lead to his non-identification if killed, and if wounded to his bleeding to death.

Fully 350 wounded and those who had died on the way passed through my hands during the evening. The stooping entailed in bandaging such a number of cases was very fatiguing, and some of those who were helping me fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. The darkness of the night added to my trouble, for the only two lanterns that I had were so bad that I could hardly discern what I was doing, and had often to work more by touch than by sight. The cheerfulness of the wounded struck me as being remarkable, men with shattered wounds smoking their pipes, and, although starving, not a grumble audible. Luckily, I had chosen a good place for a water-supply, and I had plenty of brandy and gallons of beef-tea. The kindness of the stretcher-bearers, many of whom belonged to the Natal Volunteer Ambulance Corps, was splendid. Many a poor man shot in the morning in the front-trenches, who could not be reached, and who had lain, as was often the case, in the blazing sun all day without food and water, and then in the cold of the night without his coat, and shivering, was rolled up in the stretcher-bearers' coats, and his wound bound with the bearer's only towel or only handkerchief, which was lost to its owner when the case was passed on. Officers and men, their faces caked with

red dust, and their clothes torn by shot and shell, were indistinguishable as they were carried in, except for their helmets and boots. One old colonial in Thorneycroft's, with a gray beard, walked down by the help of his rifle. He was a mass of wounds!—one ear pierced by one bullet, his chin, neck, and chest also shot right through by others, his back and legs torn by shell. He came in saying that he had just dropped in to have a finger off—it was so shattered he could not pull a trigger, and it got in the way of the next finger, which he could use; also that he wanted to get back up the hill to pay the d—— Dutchmen out. Of course I did not let him return to the fighting line.

At 1.20 p.m. General Warren heliographed to ascertain whether Colonel Thorneycroft had assumed command, and at the same time asked General Coke to give him his views on the situation on Spion Kop. Getting no reply, he asked whether General Coke was there, and subsequently received his report of the situation. The latter stated that unless artillery could silence the enemy's guns the men on the summit could not stand another complete day's shelling, and that the situation was extremely critical.

The 2nd Middlesex Regiment were the first of General Coke's Brigade to reach the plateau; this they accomplished about 1.30 p.m. About the same time a nasty 'regrettable incident' was narrowly averted by the gallantry and presence of mind of Colonel Thorneycroft. About thirty men of various regiments were on the point of surrendering; their rifles lay on the ground, and they were advancing unarmed towards the enemy's position. Coming out to meet them were some armed Boers, and others were advancing behind, all waving white rags. Suddenly, from some

Photo by Elliott and Fry.

COLONEL A. W. THORNEYCROFT, C.B.

thirty yards in the rear of our men, a soldier, whose stature made him everywhere conspicuous, rushed forth, limping on a stick. He pounced, like a hawk, on the Boer leader—a Transvaaler, by name De Koch, in whose words I shall continue the story of what happened (as De Koch afterwards described it to a British officer in the Biggarsberg): 'We had got up, and we should have had the whole hill,' he said. 'The English were about to surrender, and we were all coming up, when a great big, angry, red-faced soldier ran out of the trench on our right and shouted, "I'm the Commandant here; take your men back to h——, sir! I allow no surrenders."' The 'great big, angry, red-faced soldier' was Colonel Thorneycroft, who, after delivering his ultimatum, hobbled back to the thirty men and ordered them to follow him, and 'not to hesitate a second.' He brought them back to where the first company of the new reinforcements, the Middlesex Regiment, were lying, behind the top of the hill, and re-formed them with this company, ordering the lot to rush the plateau, and then reoccupy the trench and the crest beyond, which they did, led by himself.

About 2 p.m. an odd incident occurred. Some 170 of our men in an advanced position had been captured, and were being brought down the back of the hill; our fire had of necessity to slacken in some of the advanced trenches to avoid shooting these men as they passed across the field of fire, and as some of the enemy were within 30 yards during the pause, both sides put up their heads, and, seeing one another, a repartee ensued. It was during this that the so-called 'white flag' incident occurred. The Boers, supposing the morale of our men to be shattered,

endeavoured to start a conversation to gain time for more of their own party to come up, under cover of the dead ground at their rear. The moment the prisoners disappeared, these Boers, who were apparently deeply engaged in conversation, advanced, and some of our men did likewise. Each side now appeared to have thought that the other was about to surrender. After much shouting, neither showing any sign of giving in, firing recommenced at short range, which resulted in many casualties on both sides. Meanwhile Colonel Thorneycroft and the company of the Middlesex Regiment had reoccupied the trench and the crest line; that, at any rate, was safe for the time being. On the left side of the crest there was some slight protection from a fold in the ground to its right, which ran obliquely to the trench in the rear.

Colonel Thorneycroft now directed company after company of the Middlesex Regiment, as they arrived, to each threatened point, and thus by about 2.30 p.m. the whole front-line was held again.

Colonel Thorneycroft about this time wrote a message to General Warren stating that the Boer guns to the north-west of the plateau were sweeping the hill-top, and asking for our artillery to silence them, or that more infantry might be sent up to attack them, as the force he had at his disposal was in itself inadequate to hold so large a perimeter. He also drew attention to his heavy casualty list, and to the fact that the troops were badly in need of water. As the man who carried this note passed down the hill-side, he was stopped by General Talbot Coke, who had arrived at the belt of trees, and whose arrival was unknown to Colonel Thorneycroft. He read the note, and added a postscript to the effect that he had ordered

the King's Royal Rifles and the Scottish Rifles to reinforce, and that the Middlesex and Dorset Regiments, with the Imperial Light Infantry and 120 men of Bethune's Mounted Infantry, had arrived as reinforcements, and that our troops appeared to be holding their own at the time he wrote.

About three o'clock the Scottish Rifles, as they arrived on the plateau, were sent out by companies to right and left. Colonel Cooke, of this regiment, being senior to Colonel Thorneycroft, some discussion arose as to who was in command of the hill, and Colonel Cooke went to ask General Coke to solve the matter. He, however, declared that Colonel Hill, of the Middlesex Regiment, was in command, though it was shortly afterwards settled for certain that Colonel Thorneycroft had been appointed.

At about half-past three the intensity of the enemy's fire again increased: the Boers, by concentrating their shell-fire, were trying to retake the plateau. From this hour on to sunset a perfect tornado of shells kept bursting amongst the troops on the hill, at the rate of some seven or eight per minute. It is doubtful whether, in the records of civilized warfare, troops have ever before been exposed to similar conditions. Without sleep the night before, without water,* without cover, with a limited supply of food,† under a blazing hot African sun, the British and Colonial

* General Woodgate had reported this as early as 10 a.m., and a few tins had been sent up on mules; little, however, reached the top, as some of the mules fell down the hill, and what was left was used for the wounded.

† As the 'bully' beef served out to many of the men was in 6-pound tins, which one man was supposed to carry up the hills and divide with others, it is hardly necessary to add that many of these tins never reached their destination.

infantry, unable to move forward, still held their ground. No other troops in the world would have done so. The sufferings of the wounded under these circumstances were too horrible to be described, many of them being shot over and over again, as they attempted to crawl, and even the torpor of death did not protect their poor lifeless frames.

About four o'clock Colonel Bethune (16th Lancers) made his way up from the valley to General Coke, who was by the trees on the hillside, and volunteered to take his Mounted Infantry to assist Colonel Thorneycroft.

It is now necessary, in order to follow subsequent events, to pause in my narrative of the work done on the plateau of Spion Kop, and to follow the movements of another body of troops, who were operating against the eastern end of the hill, which is surmounted by the Twin Peaks. And in order to detail the manner in which they reached this place, it is essential to explain their movements earlier in the day.

At ten on the morning of the 24th, Lieutenant-Colonel Buchanan-Riddell, commanding the 3rd Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles, received orders from General Lyttelton, who was in charge of the Fourth Brigade, to march from Spearman's Hill, cross the Tugela at Kaffir Drift, advance on Spion Kop from the south-east, and take its two northern peaks, which I have called the Twin Peaks. Having successfully crossed the Tugela, the right half of this battalion under its Colonel, and the left half under its senior Major (Major Bewicke-Copley), divided, to allow of the front half advancing against the northern peak, and the left half against the southern elevation, the latter being central in position between the former and

the plateau, which at this time was occupied by Colonel Thorneycroft.

About mid-day each half-battalion advanced to the attack, with two half-companies in the firing line, the left half-companies of each being in local support, one company finding left and right support, and one company in reserve—all at wide intervals and distances.* The Boers were holding both objectives and the crest line between them, also some trenches and rocks half-way up. On the hill which the left half-battalion was ordered to attack stood a machine-gun in action. The hillside was almost perpendicular in places, therefore the ascent was made very slowly; the supports fired over the heads of the attacking line advancing up the spur; the reserves took up the fire when the supports became merged into the fighting line. The trenches on the right hill were turned, one after another, under a heavy flanking fire, Captain R. H. Beaumont and Lieutenant D. H. Blundell, of A Company, leading the assault, until the former was wounded. When the right half-battalion neared the top, the left half directed its fire in support. The right half now 'fixed swords' and charged the height, led by Major W. S. Kays and Lieutenant R. F. Manly-Sims, of B Company, the Boers only leaving as the men's swords appeared over the crest line. This was at 4.45 p.m. A quarter of an hour later the left half-battalion, under Major A. Bewicke-Copley, with F Company leading under Lieutenants the Hon. R. Cathcart and H. Wake, and closely supported by H Company under Captain H. C. Warre, captured the left hill. From the summit

* 'Wide intervals and distances' means that as the men advanced there were some fifteen paces between each man; such a precaution is absolutely necessary in modern war.

a Boer camp behind each hill could be seen, and a certain number of Boers retiring. The Boer trenches were found to be skilfully constructed by blasting and pick; they were about 4 feet 6 inches deep. The battalion now remained for some time under a galling discharge from both flanks, and it was noticeable that this was principally directed against the officers; they were able, however, to stop the fire of some Boer machine-guns 150 yards in their front, also to keep down the fire of some of the enemy, which was turned on Colonel Thorneycroft's right flank, as his men were still holding the plateau.

General Schalk Burger was in command of the hostile forces, which included, among others, the Carolina commando, against whom the King's Royal Rifles had made such a successful attack, having practically turned the enemy's left flank on Spion Kop, notwithstanding that Botha had sent reinforcements against them. From Boer sources it appears that Botha was at his wits' ends for men, when a panting rider from Schalk Burger reached him with an urgent message for help. Botha immediately ordered what troops he could spare to reinforce, and amongst them the Utrecht commando. Commandant Edwards, Botha's Chief of Staff, was sent by his General with some of these to the neck between the plateau and General Burger's late position; he states that he and his force were able to keep Major Bewicke-Copley's men for a time from working round the Boer left. It was at this juncture that Commandant Edwards was wounded by a bullet and had to leave the firing line, returning to General Botha, who had remained near Coventry's Farm.

It is now necessary to return to the troops on the plateau. At 6.30 p.m. General Warren asked General

Coke if he could keep two battalions on the summit, removing the remainder out of reach of shells, also whether two battalions would suffice to hold the point; this was in accordance with a telegram on the subject sent to General Warren by the Commander-in-Chief. Also at 6.30 p.m. Colonel Thorneycroft sent a written message to General Warren, in which he stated that the troops which had marched up the hill the night before (Lancashire Fusiliers, Royal Lancaster Regiment, and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry) were quite done up; they had had no water, and ammunition was running short. Colonel Thorneycroft considered that even with the reinforcements which had arrived, it would be impossible to permanently hold the hill as long as the enemy's guns were unsilenced. He stated that the Boers had three long range and three short range guns, with several pom-poms, continuously bombarding the plateau since 8 o'clock that morning, and that his casualties were very heavy; so much so, that if they went on at the present rate he could barely hold out. He again asked for water, and requested that more stretcher-bearers should be sent up. 'The situation,' he said, 'is critical.'

At about the same hour Major Bewicke-Copley received orders for the 3rd King's Royal Rifles to retire after dark from the position they had so heroically carried—namely, the Twin Peaks of Spion Kop—and this battalion, with the exception of a few men killed and wounded, whom they were then unable to bring, recrossed the Tugela by midnight practically unmolested. About nightfall—7.30 p.m.—Colonel Thorneycroft consulted with the senior officers on the hill-top. The meeting was held in a hollow by the dressing-station, and lasted only a few minutes. He

told them he thought it impossible to continue to hold the hill, and asked them their opinion. All expressed their concurrence with his views, so Colonel Thorneycroft now decided on a retirement, and this was carried out during the night.

It is now necessary to consider the events which were taking place during the darkness of night in the Boer lines. After Major Copley's force had taken the Twin Peaks of Spion Kop, thereby driving back Schalk Burger's men, and also compelling his artillery to retire, the Boers considered their position extremely serious. At 3 o'clock in the morning of the 25th General Botha held a council of war with his chief officers, at which he is said to have pronounced the Boer position as 'hopeless,' the fact of our troops occupying the Twin Peaks having so demoralized the enemy that all Botha's men are reported to have left Spion Kop in the darkness, his waggons also being in full retreat. Two items of information saved the Boer situation. The first was the announcement by Commandant Edwards, Botha's Chief of Staff, that he had heard it was not possible for the British to remain on Spion Kop, they being unable to hold their ground from lack of water, and that General Woodgate was dead. It also happened that two Boers, contrary to orders, had ventured on Spion Kop during the night to recover the body of a comrade, who had been shot the day before; having found it, they came back with the information that the Twin Peaks had been evacuated.

The relinquishment of the Twin Peaks of Spion Kop by our troops was considered by the Boers as fatal to us. I was told later in the day, while a prisoner, that, had this post been held and reinforced, their case would have been hopeless, and they could

never have retaken the hill, for in doing this the tables would have been turned, seeing they would have been subjected to a cross-fire from one of the very positions from which they had enfiladed the plateau. What really happened, they told me, was that, while the British were retiring down one side, their opponents were retreating down the other, and I have since learnt that the latter were completely exhausted and incapable of further fighting.

So it seems that the Twin Peaks of Spion Kop were really the key to Ladysmith. Encouraged by this information, General Botha issued an order at 3.30 on the morning of the 25th to withdraw every available man from Acton Homes, for the purpose of making a final dash to retake the plateau and the Twin Peaks.

I shall now return to my personal narrative. About midnight Colonel Allin, the Principal Medical Officer of the Field Force, passed through my station on his way to the summit. Shortly after this the small regulation lantern gave out, and, as it had been in the darkness the sole means of directing the wounded to the dressing-station and allowing their wounds being dressed, work had to be carried out under difficulties, and the pass often became blocked. Our trouble was still further increased by the passage of the whole of the troops from the plateau in their retirement from the hill, all having to march through the dressing-station; finally a climax was reached, when word was sent back that no more stretcher cases were to be sent across the drift until the Engineers had completed a road on which they were working. This necessitated all stretcher cases being retained, and as they came in they were laid out in rows among the rocks on each side of the path, as the track had to be kept clear.

Men, mules, Maxims, heliographs, all went by, and by dint of much shouting were kept clear of the long lines of stretchers on either hand. In one place I had collected the more severe cases; officers and men lay side by side. On one stretcher lay General Woodgate's A.D.C., the sole surviving Staff Officer of the Eleventh Brigade; he was severely wounded, and had staggered into the dressing-station in a state of collapse from loss of blood. Having had his hæmorrhage stopped and taken a little stimulant, this officer would fain have returned to the trenches, and was only prevented from doing so by a hypodermic of morphia.

When I left camp in the morning, as I expected to get back before dark, I had put on the lightest of clothes, thin drill khaki and a flimsy vest, in anticipation of the usual terrific heat from the mid-day sun; now, however, as the cold air of the night began to make itself apparent, I felt almost frozen. We had neither blankets nor great-coats; our only substitute was the empty canvas bags which the troops fill with clay for entrenching purposes; many of these lay about, and afforded some warmth when placed under our tunics and held in place by the tightening of our belts. Just before daybreak a heavy dew came on, accompanied by a further fall of temperature. The dawn breaking lit up the ghastly faces of the patients around, and I gave orders for a fresh supply of Bovril and coffee to be served out to them, of which I also partook. This was my first meal since breakfast the day before; immediately after I sent all the wounded down the hill to the drift. I then got all the stretcher parties I could muster, and visited the ill-fated plateau. On this spot not a living soul, either Briton or Boer, was moving. A death-like silence reigned. Terrible

indeed was our work here. In the still, obscure morning light we set to work in the trenches; wounded, dying and dead lay intermingled, and as we sorted them some unwounded men were found in a state of utter collapse and exhaustion from their ordeal on the previous day.

We had been but a short time engaged, when the death-like silence that reigned was interrupted by a hoarse cry to our front; I could not catch the words at once, but on its repetition it was more audible—'Hands up!' On looking up I found we were surrounded on all sides; we were prisoners. As I was the only unwounded officer with the party, I advanced to parley: explanation was useless. I said I was a doctor, but the man to whom I spoke laughed and pointed to my sleeve. I glanced at it; my brassard was gone. We were marched off under an armed guard to the back of the plateau, where some more Boers were standing, of whom I counted about thirty in all. Very soon more came up, and I spoke to one who wore a brassard; he was, he told me, a Boer doctor with an Edinburgh qualification. I satisfied him as to my identity, and he sent a message to his Commandant for our release.

General Louis Botha and his Staff now arrived; the former was pointed out to me—a good-looking man, with closely clipped beard and moustache, dressed in a brownish suit and wearing smart top-boots and spurs. He was unarmed, but a handsomely carved rifle, carried by a Kaffir, who also bore three bandoliers, was understood to be his. I explained my object on the hill to the General, and showed him the crested buttons on my tunic and some letters I had in my pocket, which satisfied him as to my identity. He

immediately ordered my release—on parole not to leave the hill without his permission; he then very kindly gave me a cigarette, and sent to his camp close by for some coffee. In the interval that followed its arrival we engaged in conversation; he bitterly complained of what he asserted to be 'British barbarity' in our want of recognition of the Geneva Convention. I asked him to support this accusation by facts. He asserted that the British had ill-treated his wounded taken some days previously at Acton Homes, that ambulances taken from the Boers in the Orange Free State had been sent to Cape Town, and that prisoners were reported as having been tied by the British to their guns and pulled along the road. I asked him whether he could either corroborate these accusations personally or produce witnesses. He answered 'No,' but that they were common reports in his lines. I then told him that, having been one of the doctors who attended the Boer wounded taken at Acton Homes, I could refute his first charge as utterly untrue; the second charge I was unable to reply to; while the third was too utterly childish to be discussed. The General not only allowed us now to attend our wounded, but offered us every assistance, his men procuring water and helping to collect the cases. Permission was, however, refused to remove any of our wounded from the hill.

By 6 a.m. on the 25th some 500 Boers had collected on the plateau; they were all well dressed and clean. Most of them wore tweed suits, leggings, and spurs, and soft hats with the Transvaal colours round the brim; each had three or four well-stocked bandoliers containing some sixty cartridges apiece. Most of them spoke English, and entered readily into conver-

sation with our men. Their occupations were varied: one, an old burgher with a long beard, got on a rock and preached a sermon for our benefit on the horrors of war; others assisted in collecting the wounded and the identification forms,* letters, and other contents from the pockets of the dead, which, to their credit I must say, were handed over to us; others gathered up rifles, bayonets, water-bottles, and boots, which they retained. Trophy-hunters were cutting off officers' buttons and badges, and this, though galling to us, was in no case carried out with any show of exultance by the victors. Some other of our medical officers had also been 'held up' by the enemy at dawn, and between us all the wounded were collected and placed in a convenient position to be taken from the hill whenever permission should be granted.

About 10 a.m. Colonel Allin, Principal Medical Officer of the Field Force, arrived on the hill, and succeeded in obtaining leave to have our wounded removed. The work was carried out at once, and within an hour's time every injured man was at the field hospitals.

On the morning of the 25th General Buller, finding that Spion Kop had been abandoned in the night, again assumed chief command, and decided to with-

* The identification of soldiers killed in action is very laborious, and often quite impossible. The present identification-ticket is sewn in a special pocket in a soldier's tunic; men often take off their coats in action, and they are temporarily mislaid, or their coats may be taken off to dress their wounds. Should such men be killed or die, all means of identification may be lost; such cases have occurred. If every man wore a metal disc bearing his name, number, and corps on a chain or cord round his neck, indentification would at all times be certain, provided the disc was not carried away by shell-fire.

draw General Warren's force. All the waggons of the Fifth Division were brought down to Trichardt's Drift during the day, and had crossed about noon of the 26th. By double spanning the loaded ox-waggons got over at the rate of about eight per hour; the mule-waggons crossed by the pontoon bridge, all the animals having to be taken out and the vehicles run over by hand. For about seven hours of the night the drift could not be used, as it was dangerous in the dark; but the use of the pontoon went on by day and night. Besides machine-guns, six batteries of Royal Field Artillery and four howitzers, the following vehicles crossed: ox-waggons, 232; mule-waggons, 237. In addition the ambulances were working backwards and forwards, removing the sick and wounded. All the hospitals were cleared by 2 p.m., and all the wounded were across the Tugela, over which they had to be hand-carried, by 6 p.m.

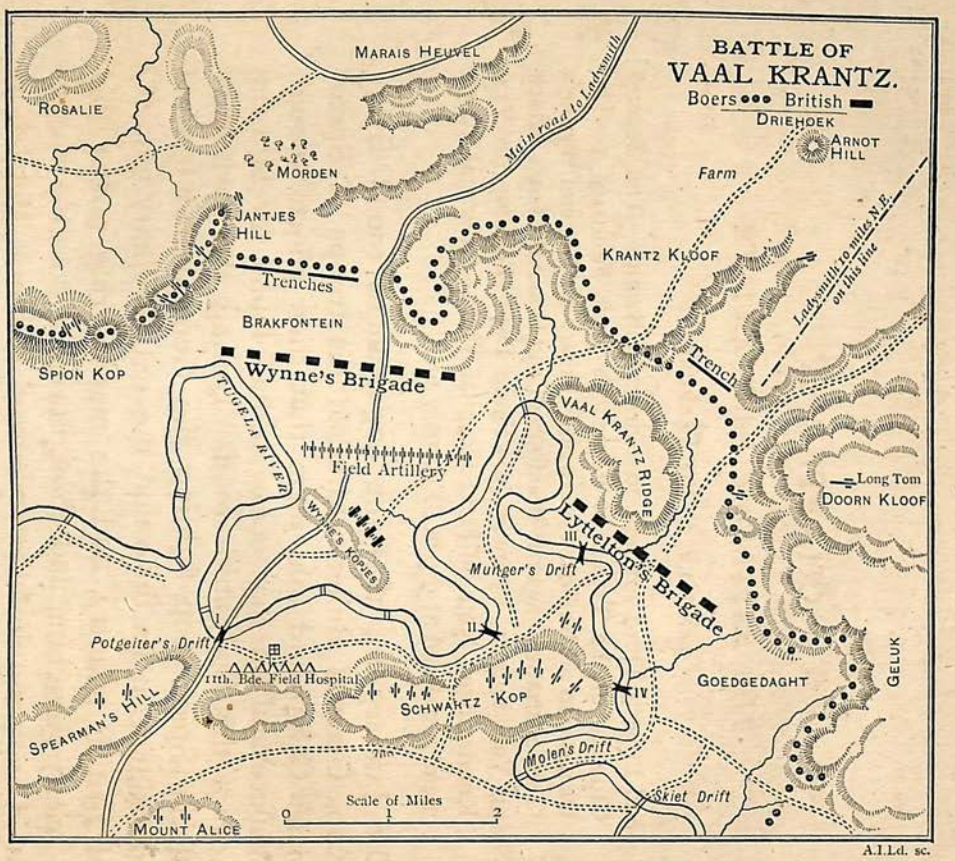
While the retirement just described was taking place, a melancholy scene was being transacted on the plateau of Spion Kop. Early in the morning of the 25th, three army chaplains, the Rev. A. A. Gedge, the Rev. L. J. Matthews, and the Rev. Mr. Wainman, with a burial party of twenty-five men of the Natal Volunteer Ambulance Corps, proceeded to Spion Kop to fulfil the last sad duties connected with the burial of the dead. On the plateau they were joined by the Rev. R. C. Collins, who had been there since daybreak. Two large graves were at once made; in one twelve bodies were placed, and in the other forty-two. As the working party was small, and as the ground was as hard as iron, rendering it almost impenetrable to spades and pickaxes, many of which were broken in the attempt, advantage was taken of

the shallow trenches thrown up by our men in the engagement of the day before; these were deepened, and another eighty-five bodies interred, thus bringing up the total buried on this day to 139. Though the enemy watched the proceedings and showed due respect and reverence, they rendered no assistance; and as darkness came on, Father Collins and the Rev. Mr. Gedge, seeing other bodies unburied, made arrangements with the Boer Commandant to come up on the following morning to finish their task.

Early on the morning of the 26th, nothing daunted, up the hill they went again with a small 'scratch' burial party to resume the interments. Some delay ensued when they reached the plateau, as the naval guns and a Maxim were firing at that spot. On these ceasing fire the party moved on, led by Mr. Gedge, who bore a Red Cross flag. The summit was attained about 2.30 p.m. Here they were met by a Boer who stated there were over a hundred more bodies to inter. In a soft piece of ground that seemed like a filled-in trench, twenty-five of these were placed, but as a fog came on and light failed no further work was done that day. During all this time the retirement of General Warren's whole force was in progress. By 2 p.m. all the wounded on waggons were across the Tugela, and by 11.30 p.m. all the mule transport had crossed and the pontoon was clear for troops. The infantry near Taba Myama were the first to withdraw. In the inky darkness, under torrents of rain which soaked all to the very skin, regiment after regiment fell back in perfect order. Never in the history of the South African War did troops behave better than at this crisis. Worn and overstrained by ten days' hardships and continuous fighting, unwashed, and

sleeping in their clothes, under ceaseless shell and rifle fire, fed on naught but 'bully' and biscuit, their morale was still unshaken. About midnight a tremendous burst of rifle-fire lit up the entire face of the Boer position, and at the moment all expected that our passage to the river was about to be contested. However, the demonstration ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. It was evidently a false alarm, probably due to the enemy having heard the movements of the troops, and imagining that they themselves were about to be the object of a night attack. No finer opportunity did the Boer Army lose throughout the Natal campaign than on this occasion, when, with the hills commanding the river on the north in their hands, and with our force cut in two by the Tugela, they allowed General Buller to remove his entire transport without the loss of a pound of stores or a single casualty, along an ill-defined track; so obscure as to necessitate its being marked out by mounted men at intervals of 100 yards, to direct the columns to the river. With the first streaks of the gray dawn* of the 27th, the last of the rear-guard crossed the pontoon, and it was taken up by Major Irvine, R.E.

* After breakfast Father Collins and the Rev. Mr. Sorsbie, and four officers and 100 men of the 2nd Dorset Regiment, left camp near Trichardt's Drift with a pontoon party to complete the burials on Spion Kop. The hill was searched in all directions for any dead that remained, and eighty-four bodies were buried, these bringing up the total to 243. The casualties recorded from January 17 to 24 gave a total of 1,733, and comprised 27 officers and 245 men killed, 53 officers and 1,050 men wounded, and 7 officers and 351 men missing.


BATTLE OF
VAAL KRANTZ.
Boers ••• British ▬
ROSALIE
MARAIS HEUVEL
Main road to Ladysmith
DRIEHOEK
ARNOT HILL
Farm
MORDEN
JANTJES HILL
Trenches
KRANTZ KLOOF
Ladysmith 10 miles N.E. on this line
BRAKFONTEIN
SPION KOP
Wynne's Brigade
Trench
TUGELA RIVER
VAAL KRANTZ RIDGE
Field Artillery
Long Tom
DOORN KLOOF
WYNNE'S KOPJES
Lyttelton's Brigade
III
Munger's Drift
II
Potgeiter's Drift
11th. Bde. Field Hospital
SPEARMAN'S HILL
SCHWARTZ KOP
IV
GOEDGEDAGHT
GELUK
Molen's Drift
Skiet Drift
Scale of Miles
0 1 2
MOUNT ALICE
A.I.Ld. sc.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF VAAL KRANTZ

JANUARY 29 TO FEBRUARY 8

General Buller's Third Attempt to relieve Ladysmith—The Second Crossing of the Tugela at Potgeiter's Drift, February 3—The Disposition of the Boer Forces on February 4—General Wynne's 'Demonstration' against Brakfontein and General Clery's Attack on Vaal Krantz, February 5—Three Days' Fighting on Vaal Krantz ridge—Note on Field Hospital Work—A General Retirement is ordered at 9 p.m., February 6.

ON January 29, after the engagement round Spion Kop, General Buller addressed his troops at Spearman's Camp, and told them that their efforts, though unsuccessful on that occasion, had found for him the key of the Ladysmith road. During the dark days of the Spion Kop fighting the General had learned to estimate at its full value the extraordinary tenacity of British infantry, and the manœuvring power that tenacity gave him, and thoughts of a possible chance at Hlangwane doubtless occurred to him. But before leaving the Upper Tugela our leader resolved to try an attack on Vaal Krantz, as it was evident that, if he could succeed in advancing on Ladysmith from the west, such a success would be far more disastrous to the enemy than anything that could be effected by an advance from the east. The Vaal Krantz

position, according to General Buller's information at the time, offered a fair prospect of success, and, moreover, he hoped that, even if he did not succeed, he should, by an attack near Doorn Kloof, and by leaving a force behind at Springfield, be able to tie a very considerable number of the enemy to the Upper Tugela.*

On January 25, as already mentioned, General Buller withdrew his force from the west of Spion Kop. While this was being done, the enemy had very considerably strengthened their right, so that any attempt to advance our left would probably have been unsuccessful; they had also taken advantage of our failure on Spion Kop, and had strengthened the position there also, so as to hinder any fresh attempt to advance our right. The General commenced preparations for a trial by the Vaal Krantz route. These preparations involved the formation of a road to the top of a very precipitous hill, and the occupation of its summit by guns. Unfortunately, the weather was very unpropitious, and seriously retarded this work; it was begun on January 27, and was completed by the evening of February 3. About one and a half miles of road through a very difficult country had had to be made up a steep hillside, and six naval 12-pounders, two 15-pounders, Royal Field Artillery, and six mountain battery Royal Field Artillery guns, had been brought to the top. The Naval Brigade, Royal Artillery, Royal

* This was absolutely essential, and had the General not moved to Vaal Krantz, Ladysmith would probably have fallen, for he received information of a premeditated Boer attack on the garrison to take place on February 7, and General White's troops could not have borne the repetition of another January 6.

Engineers, and the Royal Scots Fusiliers worked at this arduous duty; while Colonel Parsons, C.R.A., advised General Buller as to the best positions for the various guns at his disposal. The weather was too bad to admit of our getting up the two 5-inch guns, which we had hoped to have mounted there.

By February 2 it was noticeable that the enemy were anticipating General Buller's new move: we could see them digging hard along their positions, which faced Potgeiter's Drift, from Spion Kop on the west to Vaal Krantz Hill on the east. The road to Ladysmith from Potgeiter's, crossing Brakfontein, had been dug up by the Boers in many places, to make its passage by transport difficult; they had also dug several trenches across it, connecting the dongas at the foot of the hills on each side, and were reported as having laid several mines along the track.

At 5 a.m. on February 3 General Wynne's Eleventh Brigade (lately commanded by Major-General Woodgate) marched from its bivouac at Hatting's Farm, near Spearman's Camp, towards the Tugela. The route taken passed down a steep valley—a picturesque gorge of mimosa and cacti, the latter in full scarlet bloom, which abutted on the winding Tugela below Mount Alice. The erratically winding road passed between Mount Alice and Spearman's Hill, both of which eminences completely command the Tugela below. On the summits of these hills our heavy naval guns had been mounted, each gun being artfully hidden away behind bushes. We reached the Tugela at 9.30 a.m., and, after crossing a pontoon bridge which had been laid down there, bivouacked on the banks of the river. From an early hour

until nightfall a constant stream of troops, guns, and transport poured out of Spearman's Camp into the Vaal Krantz Valley. During the day the enemy fired from the hills on a few squadrons of Bethune's Mounted Infantry who were out reconnoitring, but caused no casualties; they also set fire to the grass on the left of Mount Alice, with a view to destroying cover, and enabling them to distinguish the khaki of our troops should they advance, as its light colour shows up very plainly against a dark background.

On Sunday, the 4th, the remainder of General Wynne's Brigade crossed the pontoon at Potgeiter's and relieved General Lyttelton's Brigade, which had been occupying the advanced kopjes facing Brakfontein. The day passed quietly; the chaplains had their usual church services, and everybody had a rest while waiting for the remainder of the army to come up. In the afternoon the Commanding Officers of units were made acquainted with the outline of the plan of action to be followed in the next day's engagement. If the reader will refer to the battle plan facing p. 95, it will become apparent that the Boer position from Spion Kop to Doorn Kloof can be roughly represented by a large curve, with its concavity facing the British. General Buller's new attempt was aimed at this curve, his general scheme being to seize the Vaal Krantz Hill, which formed the left of the enemy's position, and 'roll him up'* from left to right.

On Sunday night the enemy, who had been watching our movements from the hills, began to suspect a new attack. General Botha had gone to visit his family in Pretoria after the Spion Kop operations, leaving General Schalk Burger in charge of the

* Outflank or turn a position.

commandos from Acton Homes to Munger's Drift, officered by Commandants Tobias Smuts of Ermelo, Ben Viljoen and Andries Cronje, while General Lukas Meyer was left in command at Colenso. As the enemy's patrols reported the British to be massing behind Mount Alice and Schwartz Kop, cycle despatch riders were sent out to all their positions east and west of Burger's Laager, at Brakfontein, and telegrams were sent to Louis Botha at Pretoria and Lukas Meyer at Colenso, summarizing the situation and asking for assistance, General Botha being urgently requested to return.

At daylight on February 5 the cavalry brigades broke up their bivouacs behind Spearman's Hill, and took up their positions to guard the flanks and rear of the army, who were on this day about to commence their third attempt to relieve Ladysmith. At 7 a.m. one of the 4·7 naval guns on Spearman's Hill opened the engagement, directing its fire on Brakfontein. Several field batteries—the 7th, 19th, 28th, 63rd, 73rd, 78th, and 61st Howitzer Battery—followed suit by opening fire at nine minutes past seven, and General Wynne's Eleventh Brigade, comprising the South Lancashires, York and Lancasters, and Royal Lancasters, with the Lancashire Fusiliers in support, opened out and went forward in skirmishing order towards Brakfontein, which was held by the Senekal and other commandos, the advance of the infantry being covered by a vigorous artillery fire from all our guns. As the infantry went on, a large number of the enemy were seen to emerge from behind the eastern spurs of Spion Kop; and, by taking a circuitous route, they reached the back of the Brakfontein Hills, which were heavily entrenched, and disappeared.

The lines of infantry were halted some distance from the base of the hills, on which they kept up a heavy fire, which was unanswered, and not a Boer was visible. Our artillery fire was terrific; it searched every point along the ridges at which the enemy had constructed sangars or trenches. This continued for several hours, during which time not a Boer was to be seen, nor was a shot discharged in return. During this interval, as little of importance occurred, General Buller's plan of attack may be explained. To sum it up briefly, the Boers were to be deceived. To this end, General Wynne, with six batteries of artillery and four battalions, was ordered to make a feint advance on our left against Brakfontein. When the enemy's attention had been successfully distracted from the real point of attack—which was to be Vaal Krantz on our right—and when they had reinforced their right, the demonstrating force was to be withdrawn, and the artillery to be sent round to support the true attack led by General Clery, assisted by the Fourth Brigade. To prepare for this operation, a powerful force of fourteen guns had also been placed during the morning in position on the precipitous Schwartz Kop, which faced it on the south of the Tugela; the fire of these guns was to be withheld until the actual movement on Vaal Krantz was timed to come off. When Vaal Krantz was seized, the infantry were to move to their left and take the Brakfontein position in flank, turning it if possible. The artillery in the plain were to advance from the left and support them, and the cavalry were to support their right and rear.

In the meanwhile, the fight, as yet very one-sided, was proceeding on our left at Brakfontein. The demonstration was very impressive, and reminded me of

a field-day on Salisbury Plain, as I sat on the central kopje with my half-company of stretcher-bearers. The day was beautifully fine, and the semicircle of hills which reached from Spion Kop on the left to Doorn Kloof on the right was defined perfectly in its very minutest details by the clearness of the air. The crescentic positions, always held by the Boers when possible, seem to show that they have borrowed the old crescent formation adopted by the Zulus, from whom they possibly learnt it. Between where I sat and the hills extended a wide plain, devoid of cover save from a few ant-hills. Here some five or six long lines of khaki-clad infantry were lying, almost indistinguishable, but for their regular sequence, from the ant-hills, each man being some ten paces from the next. With glasses it was possible to discern what they were doing. Those in the front line were lying face down, firing, while those in the rear lines were variously employed. Here a man was on his back, with his hands under his head, smoking and sunning himself; there another trying to open a 'bully beef' tin, another playing with a dog on a string. Behind the infantry were the artillery, six batteries formed up in brigade divisions, with mathematical precision. As their presence had been intended as a demonstration, for once such an exposure was an advantage, and they looked a really tempting bait for any Boer who had seen Colenso. At the rear of the 15-pounders, in a slight dip between the kopje on which I sat and another on which a traction engine was puffing, the howitzers were in position, each gun sitting in a little 'dig-out'—as it seemed, a nest—and pointing its gaping muzzle skywards to fire lyddite shells, which, bursting on the Brakfontein Hills, cut holes and

disfigured their natural beauty. About 9.30 a.m. the 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery, which was on the left of the line of guns, received orders to retire and cross the Tugela at Pontoon No. 2, and cover the formation of Pontoon No. 4 by the Royal Engineers, which was to be used by the Light Brigade in the advance preparatory to the attack on Vaal Krantz.

Save for the bursting of our shells, an ominous silence—it seemed almost a silence of death—still reigned over the enemy's position, and not a shot was fired nor a Boer seen. The gallant Lancashire Brigade were not to be deceived by such silence. They had learned to their cost the ruses Brother Boer could adopt; they had not spent a week in the trenches in Taba Myama and faced the 'Boger' for twenty-four hours on Spion Kop for naught. Comrades had to be avenged and old scores wiped off before they returned to their native shire.

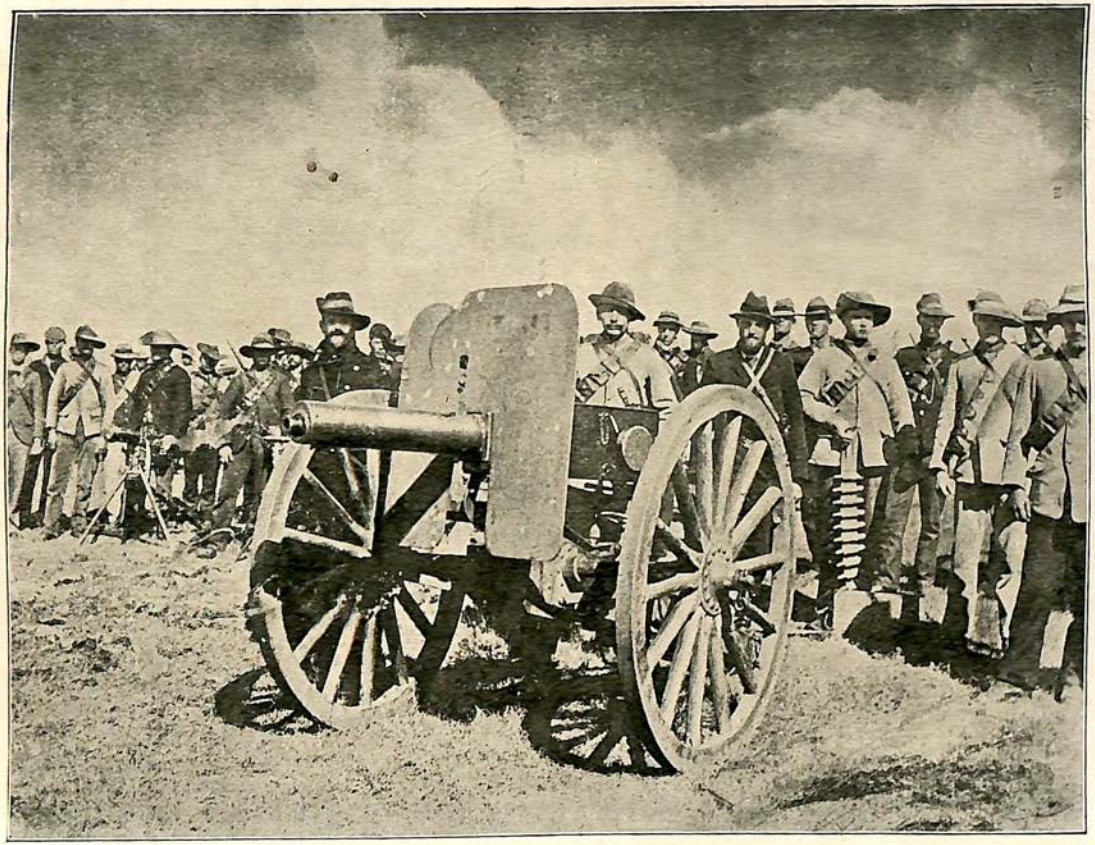
A continuous splutter of rifle-fire was in steady progress all along our firing lines; occasionally it waned, and occasionally it increased. The imperturbable Thomas Atkins is not without interest or humour, even when lying prone behind an ant-hill under a blazing sun while plying his dangerous trade. Two or three men were thus engaged close to me. I overheard snatches of their conversation: 'Got a match, chum?' 'Where's the bloke?' 'Loose off a few rounds, chum, just to let 'em know we ain't dead!' 'Wot's we to fire at?' 'I dunno.' 'The bloke said the 'ill-top; maybe Krooger's behind.'

Away on the plain near the Ladysmith Road stood a solitary tree; on both sides of this the infantry were lying in long lines. Presently the advance line stood up and moved some fifty yards forward. The Brak-

fontein Hills seemed but a short distance ahead. It almost appeared as if we were going to draw a blank: had Brother Boer really left us an open gate? But no. Pit! pot! A single Mauser rifle speaks. Concealment is no longer possible. Is it by accident or design that this solitary Mauser is fired? It has been heard before: it was heard at Magersfontein, it was heard at Colenso, and here it is heard again. Had it not rung out, the Lancashire Brigade would, I have no doubt, have advanced further. As it was, in their extreme eagerness they had advanced to within 1,500 yards of the base of Brakfontein, rather closer than General Buller had wished. Following this single shot ensued a momentary pause in our firing line. 'Where is this audacious fellow?' seemed the thought that passed through the minds of our infantry. Momentary it was and not more, for it is followed by a perfect roar of Mauser fire—Pit, pot! pit, pot, pot! pit, pot, pot! If a tornado had burst, its fury could not have been more imposing. Simultaneously the Boer artillery opened fire: one large gun and one small one on Spion Kop, and two Krupps firing segment shell, with two 'pom-poms from Brakfontein, join the fray, enfilading the infantry on our left and the batteries in the centre. So sudden and so furious was this outburst of shot and shell that the whole plain was obscured by smoke and dust, and, from a spectacular point of view, it seemed as if Wynne's Brigade was going to be wiped out. It was truly an awful display. The enemy's shells seemed to be falling everywhere, well-placed time shrapnel bursting over the infantry, over the gunners, over the battery horses, the ground underneath the burst torn up by bullets, and the dust rising in a halo all round. Pom-pom-pom-pom-pom! barked the

Vickers-Maxim. Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang! went the shells as they exploded, with white smoke in long lines as each shell seemed to race the others in their errand of death. Boom-m-m! went the big gun on our left, high up on Spion Kop, artfully hidden away behind the eastern side of the Twin Peaks. Bang! went its explosion, as it threw up a mountain of smoke, dust, and stones, enfilading our left. Bang! goes a second gun perched high on the top of Spion Kop, away on our west, from which a dense column of white smoke rises to the sky, betraying the use of black powder. Bang! goes its burst, as it enfilades our infantry from their left. Never was a more artistic battle-scene presented to the spectator. It might be compared to a vast Roman amphitheatre, with its arena below, on which our troops were the gladiators, and on which they were being pelted by the occupants of the seats, safely ensconced in an immense semi-circle of dark sangared trenches, rising one above the other in tiers.

This Spartan trial for our infantry was soon to end. Shortly after mid-day General Wynne, having accomplished his object, gave the order for his infantry to retire. Slowly—too slowly, it seemed—the front line rose to their feet, and, without the least sign of haste, sedately marched back through the second line and lay down. As the sturdy Lancashire men did this, the fury of the storm again arose. Big shells, little shells, and bullets tore around them. The new front line repeated the same manœuvre, and before such a stern bombardment such a retirement was unequalled. Some of the enemy, imagining we had lost the day, went so far, even, as to leave their trenches, running forward in order to get within closer range;



BOER POM-POM, OR VICKERS-MAXIM GUN.

This gun was in action at Alleman's Nek and elsewhere.

Boer photo.

and many of them paid for their folly, as our artillery were covering the retirement of the infantry with an exceedingly well-directed fire.

Shortly before one o'clock our artillery got their order to withdraw. Magnificent as was the conduct of the infantry in the coolness displayed in carrying out their retirement while harassed on all sides, it was fully equalled by that of the gunners. The batteries were to be withdrawn singly. Behind the kopje on which I sat some of the horses of the gun teams were sheltering. I heard the order given: 'Stand to your horses! Prepare to mount! Mount! Walk! march! trot!' The first section swept by at an easy pace—no man loves his horses better than the British gunner; away they sped, swerving slightly to get round the howitzer battery, and, once past it, they were out on the naked plain. Straight to the guns they went; a graceful curve to allow the limbers to face the gun-carriages, and the guns were hooked in. Swift as an arrow the enemy perceived what was being done. Their prey, the coveted guns, which they considered almost in their grasp, was to be snatched from them. Upon this gallant band they now directed their whole attention. From the west and from the north the Boer guns again opened, and on our moving gunners they concentrated their fire.

In column of route these men returned, sitting sedately on their guns and limbers, the very horses champing their bits and tossing their heads defiantly. As they came back, a mighty shout—a shout of applause—burst forth from the Lancashire Brigade, now lining the kopjes. Pursued every step by bursting shells, it was not to be wondered at that casualties occurred. As we moved out to assist

the wounded, we had our share of this tornado of shell-fire. Halfway between the guns and the kopje one gun with its limber had halted. Three of the horses had been struck down, and the men were busy freeing them from their traces. Two of the riders were seriously wounded. One had both his legs smashed into pulp by a shell which passed through them and through his horse. Man and beast seemed one awful mass, yet this poor fellow's sole object seemed to be to use his fingers to free the harness and assist his comrades to remove the gun.

After sending back these sufferers on a stretcher, we moved on to the guns. Here we found Lieutenant Trimble, R.A.M.C., medical officer in charge of one of the brigade divisions, busy dressing his Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Montgomery, R.A., who had been shot. Captain Dawson, R.A., was lying beside one of his guns, severely wounded by shrapnel, and four of his gunners were also injured. It so happened that, as three of the guns of the 78th Battery were retiring, one of the enemy's shells struck a gun-carriage and disabled it, and at the same time wounded Captain Dawson. Despite a terrific hail of shrapnel, the brave gunners repaired the carriage, and, putting their horses in motion, rescued their weapon and brought it under shelter of one of the kopjes, the 73rd Battery covering its retirement. This was a really magnificent piece of work.

Besides the officers already mentioned, a number of gunners and drivers also required attention, all of whom, after having their wounds bandaged, were removed on stretchers to the nearest field hospital, which was Major Drew Moir's at Potgeiter's Drift,

close by—so close, indeed, that it received quite a number of the enemy's shells. One by one each battery hooked in and withdrew; each, as it did so, got heavily shelled by the enemy—a sort of encore, it seemed, from its audience in the dress circle; and each, as it reached the kopjes behind, drew its share of applause from the infantry there—in the pit.

By half-past one all the batteries had gone, with wonderfully few casualties, considering the gauntlet they had to run. By 1.40 p.m. they had recrossed the river at Potgeiter's, and were again to repeat their daring exposure in action against Vaal Krantz. The infantry had by this time also withdrawn in good order, bringing their wounded with them, and the feint was over. The plain was unoccupied, save for a few stragglers who were digging with their bayonets for unexploded shells, and the enemy's fire had practically ceased.

Considering the terrible fire the Eleventh Brigade had been exposed to on the level ground, the casualty list was extremely small—twenty-three cases only. How this was so it is impossible to explain; but I was informed by a field officer in the fighting line that, had the enemy's accuracy with the rifle been one-tenth what it had the reputation of being, we should have had very serious losses. Although their shell-fire had been extremely correct, many failed to burst, and some of the Krupp segment shells, which I had an opportunity of examining during the afternoon, were found to be filled with sand. So much for Boer honesty in commerce. Notwithstanding the hundreds of pom-pom shells showered on our infantry—many at quite close range, and all of which detonated perfectly—I only saw one case that had a mortal result. A private

of the York and Lancaster Regiment was hit by three of these shells in the body; one of them, striking his bayonet as it hung on his left side, twisted it into a complete semicircle.

During this part of the day's action the heat of the sun was intense. As an example of its severity, I may mention that, while examining several of the infantry who had been wounded, and who had been lying in the firing line since morning, I noticed the entire surface of the skin's cuticle over their shoulders raised in huge sun-blisters, thus proving what the sufferings of this branch of the service must be under an African sun. The men who were killed were buried after the retirement close to the back kopje, each grave being fenced in with barbed-wire railings, and a wooden cross, made out of a 'bully beef' packing-case, put at the head, with the man's name cut on it. As an extra precaution for further identification, when, in the future, an iron cross should come to be erected, the man's name, with other particulars, was written on a piece of paper and put into an empty bottle, which, after being corked, was stuck head downwards beneath the cross. Even the burials were not without their danger, as the enemy kept shelling us from Spion Kop, to the full view of which we were exposed throughout the service, which I myself read,* its impressiveness, the men standing round bareheaded, being several times interrupted by someone calling out, 'Look out, sir! there's another shell coming!' And I must confess shell-fire is distinctly unpleasant at any time, and more especially under such trying circumstances as these.

* The chaplains were busy in the hospitals at this period of the day.

I will now attempt to describe the real action of the day, which took place on our right, or eastern flank, and was mainly directed against Vaal Krantz, a small hill on the northern side of the Tugela, almost facing Munger's Drift. It will be necessary first, briefly, to state its position in relation to the surrounding and dominating hills. The tortuous course of the Tugela, as it runs south through the Vaal Krantz valley from below the Spion Kop plateau on the west to the eastern spur of Schwartz Kop on the east, may be said to resemble the letter M—a very erratically-formed letter, I must confess, but it will serve for the purposes of description. To the north-west of its first acute angle lie the Twin Peaks of Spion Kop; in front of the second or obtuse angle is the Vaal Krantz plain, on which the demonstration by General Wynne just described took place; and on the north-east of the second or last acute angle of the M lies the Vaal Krantz ridge, some 2,000 yards from the river. This ridge, which is crescentic with a hog-backed eminence, is about one and a half miles long, and faces the river by its concavity. On the west it is backed by the long slopes of Brakfontein, and on the east it is dominated by a high green mountain, Doorn Kloof, and a number of other lofty hills, which are as yet nameless.

Simultaneously with General Wynne's feint against the west of Brakfontein, General Clery's Division* and General Lyttelton's Brigade advanced to Pontoon Bridge No. 2,† where they massed as if about to support the false frontal attack. When General Wynne had engaged the enemy's attention for some two hours, Generals Clery and Lyttelton were to

* Comprising Hart's and Hildyard's Brigades.

† For position, see map facing p. 95.

move their troops rapidly east, across the tongue of ground north of Schwartz Kop, and advance against Vaal Krantz ridge, crossing the river by Pontoon Bridge No. 4, which was in process of construction. When the infantry had attacked Vaal Krantz, the assault was to be supported by the combined efforts of our artillery, on both high and low ground. On Schwartz Kop the following guns were in position: Six naval 12-pounders; six mountain battery 9-pounders; two 15-pounders (64th Battery Royal Field Artillery); two 50-pounders (5-inch, Royal Garrison Artillery). Two naval 4·7 guns were mounted on Spearman's Hill. The six batteries which had been supporting General Wynne were also to assist; they were to cross Pontoon Bridge No. 2, and take up a new position against Vaal Krantz. Here they were to remain until the infantry had captured the hill, when they were to advance with Colonel Burn Murdoch's First Cavalry Brigade,* cross Pontoon Bridge No. 4, and come into action on Vaal Krantz ridge, directing their fire against Brakfontein to prepare it for the advance of General Clery's infantry. Against the west of Brakfontein General Wynne was to co-operate if opportunity offered. General Coke's Tenth Brigade was to remain in reserve. Lord Dundonald's Cavalry Brigade† was to guard the right and rear of the army against any attack from the direction of Doorn Kloof. To the east of Schwartz Kop at Munger's

* Comprising Royals, 13th Hussars, 14th Hussars, and 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery.

† Comprising the South African Light Horse, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, Bethune's Mounted Infantry, Composite Mounted Infantry (Gough), and Dundonald's Galloping Colt Battery.

Drift, supported by the fire of the 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery, under Major Paget, which had been withdrawn for this purpose from the open plain, the Royal Engineers had been busy during the morning laying down another pontoon, which they completed by noon. The gallant sappers had a heavy casualty list during the day, for they lost some dozen men killed and wounded by the concentrated fire of the enemy's marksmen, who did their level best to harass the work. Although exposed to continuous rifle-fire, which splintered many a plank of the bridge, these gallant sappers systematically performed their task; the various sections of the unwieldy raft-like bridge were fitted together and its construction skilfully carried out under the personal supervision of Major Irvine, R.E.

As an illustration of the nature of the country, and the means of communication from one place to another available to the enemy, the following example may be of interest. Some Boers were observed escorting what appeared to be a pom-pom gun drawn by eight horses on a galloping carriage across the back of their position, from west to east. As they crossed by Munger's Farm—Klipport Road—they came under the fire of our guns on Schwartz Kop. Our first shell fell very close; the team swerved sharply to their right, and disappeared; they seemed to have fallen into a donga. Another shell followed them, but no more was seen of the pom-pom for some time, when it reappeared at least a mile away, coming out of another donga, short of two horses and a man, and galloped to cover. The country was honeycombed with these dongas, all of which had been utilized by the enemy for defence.

At noon General Louis Botha arrived with reinforcements. The Boer Generalissmo had been away at Pretoria on leave, and had been hurriedly telegraphed for, as before stated, on February 4. Reaching Vaal Krantz, he assumed the chief command, and having allotted the reinforcements he had brought with him from the Ladysmith laagers, he concentrated a heavy artillery fire on Vaal Krantz. It was not until about 2 p.m. that the second act in the Vaal Krantz battle commenced. At this hour General Lyttelton crossed the pontoon at Munger's Drift at the head of the following force: 1st Rifle Brigade, 1st Durham Light Infantry, 3rd King's Royal Rifles, 2nd Scottish Rifles, and 2nd Devons, the last-named regiment being lent him by General Hildyard, who was holding his own Brigade, the Second, in reserve under the slopes of Schwartz Kop. While crossing the bridge, General Lyttelton's men are exposed to a perfect tornado of shell and rifle fire. In one continuous stream they dash across. A Boer pom-pom under Ben Viljoen enfilades them from their right front; it has crept up cautiously, and is in action on a small kopje to the right of Vaal Krantz Ridge, well tucked away under cover of a kloof, safe from our artillery. Once across, the infantry re-arrange themselves, each regiment taking advantage of what cover it can; it is the scantiest imaginable.

An advance is now made for some 600 yards up the north bank of the Tugela. About the same hour the field batteries which had been in action on the west of Vaal Krantz plain with General Wynne's Brigade also crossed, and immediately came into action against the Vaal Krantz ridge. The cannonade was now terrific, as the guns on Schwartz Kop and

Mount Alice also joined in, some sixty in all being at work. The summit of Vaal Krantz was quite obscured by bursting shells. General Lyttelton now sent the 1st Durham Light Infantry and the 1st Rifle Brigade forward against Vaal Krantz, before reaching the lower slopes of which it was necessary to cross a donga held by the enemy. Half a battalion made its way to Munger's Farm, which enfiladed the line of advance to the hill. From a kopje on the extreme right, not more than 2,000 yards from Vaal Krantz, and under Doorn Kloof, the enemy pour a heavy fire from a pom-pom and rifles. Four of our Maxims open against this hill, and, as the enemy's fire cannot be got under, the Devons are about to advance and take it. Just as they are getting under way, General Hildyard gallops up to their ranks and stops the advance, for he sees that the taking of this hill would result in heavy loss, as it is exposed to a double enfilade fire from north and south.

Munger's Farm is seized by a bayonet charge, and the Light Brigade now advance on Vaal Krantz, the intervening donga being rushed in like manner. Still at the 'double,' the infantry now clamber up Vaal Krantz; a heavy fire is poured on them from their front and from both flanks; still, on they rush. At 4.30 p.m. a surging mob of victorious British soldiers race over the crest, and a 'battue' and a mêlée take place; bayonets are again used freely by the Durham Light Infantry, who themselves lose seven officers and some seventy men in this assault. The Boers break and fly;* some half-dozen hold up their hands; haggard crea-

* Vaal Krantz was occupied by a gun and some 120 of the enemy. The Field-Cornet in charge went off with the gun and about half of these as our troops approached; most of the rest were killed.

tures they are, with unkempt locks and lyddite-stained, ragged coats; they have fought well and hard, and their lives are spared. They are led away with their wounded brothers and the captured horses, under a guard, to the rear. Vaal Krantz is ours: it is again British soil.

It may be of interest to record, in view of Mr. Kruger's allegation, referring to his abhorrence of the employment of armed Kaffirs in the war, that on no occasion were they so employed by his burghers, that when the summit of Vaal Krantz was reached five or six armed Kaffirs were found aiding the enemy. Lieutenant Lambton, of the Durham Light Infantry, was wounded by one. There is no possible doubt about this record, as General Buller made searching inquiries into it at the time, and embodied it in his despatch of February 8. This incident, with many other authentic ones, should be carefully noted.

Vaal Krantz not affording sufficient cover for so many troops, some of the attacking force were sent to take cover in the bed of the spruit below; upon this and upon the hill itself the enemy concentrated a hot fire. Three guns on Spion Kop were particularly annoying, and took some time to silence, as they were difficult to locate. At last, however, the 4·7 on Mount Alice got their range and managed to smash one up; the Naval Brigade claims also to have damaged the muzzle of another, so that its shooting became inaccurate. The third gun, being under cover of one of the Twin Peaks, was so well protected by the mountains that even the bluejackets had to confess that they could not reach it.

From the hour General Lyttelton's Brigade captured Vaal Krantz until nightfall the troops were busy en-

trenching themselves, no further attack being made on our side during this interval. About 6.30 p.m. the enemy, who had by this time reinforced their left with more artillery, directed a heavy shell-fire on Vaal Krantz, compelling our troops to take cover under its western slopes. By nightfall the programme of the day as originally laid down was not completed, the actual work done only consisting in General Wynne's demonstration against Brakfontein, and the capture and occupation of Vaal Krantz by General Lyttelton's Infantry; while the third part of the original plan—namely, the occupation of Vaal Krantz by our field-guns, and the main attack against the Brakfontein position by a turning movement of General Clery's Division and the First Cavalry Brigade—was postponed for another day.

As the darkness of night set in, our guns ceased firing, as also did the heavier pieces of the Boers; but their smaller fry, pom-poms and Maxims, kept raking the reverse slopes of Vaal Krantz with very great accuracy, the crimson-yellow flashes of the bursting shells momentarily lighting up the bivouac of the infantry, making them think that a counter-attack was intended, and keeping them awake. Shortly before dark I had a narrow escape from shell-fire. I had just finished my evening meal, and had strolled up to examine the traction-engine which worked our search-light on Wynne's Kopjes; just then a shell struck the ground a short distance away, and, failing to burst, buried itself in the ground. I foolishly walked over to secure it as a trophy, but as I was rooting it up with a stick another hit a rock a few paces off, covering me with a cloud of clay and stones, and filling my eyes with dust. It came so quickly that I had not even

time to duck, much less to take cover, and I could distinctly smell the detonating charge. The traction-engine here kept working all the evening, making a hideous din and sending up dense clouds of smoke. Its noise kept us awake for some hours, but the enemy came to our assistance in this matter, for they shelled it so vigorously that it had to stop working, and by midnight silence reigned supreme from one end of the valley to the other, and all, save the sentinels—the eyes of the army—were asleep.

At twilight on Tuesday, February 6, the booming of guns ushered in the dawn, and roused us from our bivouacs. Away to the east, on the crest and slopes of Vaal Krantz, General Lyttelton's Brigade was the centre of the enemy's fire; his troops had but a sorry breakfast, for, raked by shrapnel, pom-pom, common shell, and Mauser hail, their time was fully occupied in taking what cover they could from the scanty sangars and trenches they had improvised during the night with their bayonets and horny hands; and here be it stated that Tommy Atkins is no mean expert with such instruments. Below Vaal Krantz, in the more sheltered cover of a deep donga, the Devons had a better chance of getting their morning meal, as was evident from the upward-curling smoke of their brushwood fires, rising in the still air of the morning; even they are soon to be interrupted, as the fray is about to begin at close quarters. A commotion is noticeable on the north crest of Vaal Krantz; bayonets are glittering and moving forward; guns boom and rifles crackle. The Boers are attacking the hill: they mean to retake Vaal Krantz! Reserve troops are sent up to the crest line, and our men there, thus reinforced, surge forward; bayonets are glinting in the morning sun; a rush forward, and

they disappear over the crest, and the sudden cessation of continuous fire lets us know that the Boers are repulsed.

During the morning it was reported that our field-guns could not be placed on Vaal Krantz, its sides being too steep and rocky; besides, the enemy's long-range rifle-fire was too heavy, and thus as an artillery position it was valueless, unless the Boers were cleared out of the hills which dominated it. These hills formed their second position, which was of considerable strength; its line of approach would have to be undertaken by infantry alone, under an enfilade fire from the enemy's guns; their artillery had been reinforced during the night by the arrival from Ladysmith of a Long Tom, a Creusot gun on platform mountings firing a 96-pound shell to a range of 12,000 yards. This monster was perched high on the top of a hill above Doorn Kloof, and could be barely ranged by our long-range guns on Schwartz Kop, while the Boers had also a number of smaller guns tucked away in recesses in the kloofs to the east and west of Vaal Krantz, so artfully hidden and sheltered that our artillery could not harm them, even when their positions were located. Under these circumstances it was considered too costly for the infantry yet to attempt to capture this position in daylight.

During the day our heavy guns bombarded Spion Kop, Brakfontein, and Doorn Kloof, and kept the enemy fully occupied. The Naval Brigade on Schwartz Kop, to enliven matters, engaged Long Tom of Doorn Kloof in a long-range artillery duel with their 4·7, and made some very pretty shooting at 11,500 yards; the encounter was most interesting. Snap—boom! goes the report of the naval guns, a

scream as the shell passes onwards, a pause, a flash of light, a cloud of dust and lyddite rises on Doorn Kloof; another pause; bang! goes the burst, followed by the clashing din of its echoes as it reverberates first down the valley to the east, near the burst, then echoes and re-echoes, and is thrown back as the hills on the west take it up and finally return it again from Spion Kop, for all the world like rolling thunder. Long Tom now replies. From the summit of a huge emplacement above Doorn Kloof something uncanny appears, almost perpendicular, against the sky, like a miniature factory chimney, one might say; it is the muzzle of the huge Creusot, as it is run forward, rising like some prehistoric monster from its lair. The naval men watch it through their glasses from Schwartz Kop; they know what is about to follow, that still they are safe, and that the time has not yet come to take cover. A great flash of light, which seems yards long, is emitted from the monster, and its muzzle disappears; a column of white smoke arises, at first small, but rapidly increasing in size as it ascends in convolutions to the blue sky. A pause follows; then the report of discharge rings out, Boom-m-m! which re-echoes through the valleys; then another pause, a scream, growing louder and louder as the shell approaches. Now, and only now, do the naval men take cover; they scamper to their gun, for the target is always the safest place. Another flash, another cloud of smoke mixed with clay; perhaps a few stones are visible, though rarely; another pause, and the report of the burst is heard, Bang! a much more insignificant bang than that of the lyddite burst of our gun.

Thus the duel went on all day, and on two occasions the Naval Brigade succeeded in blowing up Long

Tom's magazine or ammunition store alongside the enemy's gun, which each time was heralded by a terrific report and dense clouds of smoke. Half a dozen times during the day, owing to short intervals of cessation of firing from the Creusot, the 'Handy Man' claims to have knocked his antagonist out; but he is wrong, for after a short pause Long Tom comes up again and resumes firing. In the meanwhile our field batteries were not idle; six or seven of them had drawn up in close formation in a semicircle on the Vaal Krantz plain, near the river south of Thornhill Farm, and were hammering away to their hearts' content at the Brakfontein position. Spion Kop and Doorn Kloof they, of course, could not reach, though the enemy's guns on those hills were enfilading them. The Boer artillery always seem to have the happy knack of keeping out of range, by getting behind the cover of slopes and spurs, where they can see without being either seen or reached. The British field-guns, on the other hand, have but one kind of formation for all fighting—that is, in line at stated intervals, irrespective of the nature of the ground—and until the battle of Pieter's have had but little chance of proving what a really effective thing a concentrated fire from such formations is. At Pieter's, and on other occasions afterwards, they had this opportunity, and tied for honours with the infantry in the day's success. The enemy had a fine target in the six batteries, as they lay drawn up on the Vaal Krantz plain, and did not neglect it; from three sides—from Spion Kop, Brakfontein, and from the direction of Doorn Kloof—the Boer guns made most accurate shooting. They placed their shells beautifully, timed their shrapnel correctly, and left no stone unturned to smash our artillery. This,

however, they failed to achieve, as their material was faulty; many failed to burst, and the few that did caused but little damage. The gun teams of our batteries were drawn up behind a small knoll of rising ground, close to the river, and the enemy shelled the horses vigorously; but again, notwithstanding an excellent target and splendid marksmanship, little damage was done.

I was greatly impressed with the behaviour of the battery horses under what must have been a most tormenting fire; they showed the utmost unconcern, and some of the animals, even when hit, scarcely seemed to wince. Any horse that chanced to be wounded was treated by a veterinary surgeon on the spot, and the more serious cases were shot dead at the time, thus avoiding unnecessary suffering.

About 10 a.m., while waiting to be of service in case of casualties with the men of my half of Major Winter's bearer company on Wynne's Kopjes, a shell passed close to my head. I was standing on the summit of the kopje conversing with Major Matthews, of the King's Own. We both wondered what the enemy were firing at, but on looking up saw the cause. The poor old traction-engine on the next kopje, which had been so ruthlessly disturbed the night before, was getting up steam and endeavouring to turn round preparatory to descending the hill. The ever-observant enemy had 'spotted' it, and within the next five minutes fifteen shells (I counted them) passed in quick succession over our heads, like ducks flighting. The majority of them did not burst, and as they began to fall short, dropping among my men, one or two of whom were struck, I did not consider it fair to detain the stretcher-bearers, who had no wounded to

look after, nor the prospect of any, except among themselves, if they were allowed to remain; I accordingly told them to extend* and retire. As we did so several shells followed us. One struck a small tree, which it felled; another 'lobbed' into a group of mules and Kaffirs, killing three of the former and wounding more; the rest stampeded. Another burst on the traction-engine, wounding a Kaffir, who crawled underneath as his companions bolted, leaving only the conductor in charge. A diversion was now created, and all interest was centred on a strange object which was seen rising near the river. This was the war balloon. Slowly, so slowly that it hardly seemed to move, rose the scaly, brown-coloured monster, wobbling from side to side in its endeavours to break away from a cart which held its tether. Bang! bang! bang! go the Boer guns, big and small, from 6-inch Creusots to 1-inch pom-poms, for never was there an army, except that of China, with a more varied and nondescript collection of ordnance than this army of Louis Botha. For two hours the balloon floats high in the air, almost as high as Spion Kop, and Captain Phillips, R.E., the daring aeronaut, is scanning the Boer position from his swaying basket in mid-air, and describing what he sees to the earth below by telephone.

Late in the afternoon the enemy made another sudden attempt to retake Vaal Krantz, creeping up to within short range and opening a heavy fire, supported by their artillery. Our outposts at the western

* Stretcher-bearers should always be moved about in extended order like infantry, in order that their stretchers may be seen by the enemy, and also that, if fired upon, they may offer the flimsiest possible target.

end of the hill were driven back with loss, and for a short time it almost seemed as if the hill would be recaptured. General Lyttelton, however, saved the situation by sending half a battalion of the Durham Light Infantry, supported by the King's Royal Rifles, and these troops, led by Colonel Fitzgerald, of the former corps, came to close quarters with the enemy at the point of the bayonet, and, with three ringing cheers, swept them from the hill, Colonel Fitzgerald being himself severely wounded as he led the charge.

As night came on, Hildyard's Brigade got orders to relieve Lyttelton's, which had stolidly borne the brunt of a bombardment for thirty-six long hours without a single murmur. The relieving brigade took up the following positions on Vaal Krantz. The crest line was occupied by the Queen's, the East Surreys, and the West Yorks, in the order named, from left to right; the Devons occupied the reverse slopes as reserve. All these troops made the best of their time in 'sangaring' their positions. Each man well knew his best chance for the following day's fight lay in his ability to construct these stone-wall fortifications.

During the night the enemy had again been reinforced in men and guns. On the lower slopes of Spion Kop, carefully tucked away behind a hump, a new arrival, a big 40-pounder, had been mounted, and this piece, with the other guns on the hill, started firing after dawn of the 7th, about 5.40 a.m., enfilading the long lines of the sturdy Devons on Vaal Krantz. Long Tom on Doorn Kloof, with some smaller guns and pom-poms, opened from the east; two high-velocity guns in front; a battery of field-guns and some more pom-poms on Brakfontein opened from the west. In the morning all centred their fire

on Vaal Krantz and our two 5-inch guns, which were drawn up on the flat by the river. As the morning wore on other targets occupied the attention of the Boer artillery, one of these being General Wynne's Eleventh Brigade, who had left their bivouacs at 4.30 a.m. on the kopjes facing Potgeiter's, and moved to below Schwartz Kop to support General Clery's Division. The transport and the cavalry, who were also sheltering here, were shelled, and Major Goggins' 4th Brigade Field Hospital received its share of attention. About 2 p.m. the enemy's six field-guns on Brakfontein again opened fire on Vaal Krantz. In less than an hour's time these guns dropped close on 300 Creusot shells among the closely-packed troops on this hill. It was a trying day for our infantry—a day of everlasting watching, and dodging shell-fire. All bore it stolidly, and none flinched, lying there under the blazing sun, motionless lines of enduring men, all true to the famous traditions of the British Army.

Below the eastern spur of Schwartz Kop the Royal Engineers are laying a new pontoon—Pontoon No. 3.* They in their turn are perceived by the enemy, who open fire on the gallant sappers; still they work on fearlessly, as they did at their previous bridges, and only leave when their work is accomplished. From Vaal Krantz a steady stream of stretcher-bearers is winding its way back to the field hospital below the north-western spur of Schwartz Kop. As they arrive with their bleeding and maimed charges they are met by the hospital orderlies. The cases are sorted according to the severity of their wounds, and all except those requiring immediate operation are

* See map facing p. 95.

given bovril, coffee, or stimulants, as a medical officer thinks fit. All the available surgeons save those who are with the regiments in the fighting line are busy rendering assistance, rank making no difference. A Principal Medical Officer of a division is working as hard as, if not harder than, the last-joined subaltern. With each and all the aim is the same: treat, feed, rest, and evacuate* is the universal routine. The severe cases have their pain relieved by hypodermic injections of morphia; some, who require immediate operation, go to the special marquee set apart for this purpose. Inside this are the operators and their assisting staff; in the centre is the field service operating-table, with its folding top and waterproof sheet cover. It is supported by the now empty surgical panniers, from which the instrument cases and other accessories have been removed. In one corner of the tent a long nickel-plated caldron is boiling. In it the instruments are being sterilized in allotropic† water filtered from the Tugela. On the top of a couple of 'bully beef' boxes near the head of the table are trays of antiseptic solutions, with covers superimposed. The latter are

* 'Evacuate' is here used in the military sense, meaning clear out or pass on those of the sick and wounded who are in a fit condition to be removed from a field hospital on stretchers or ambulances to one of the larger hospitals in the rear. It is always advisable to move as many of these cases as possible, for a field hospital only accommodates 100 patients, and one never knows when a further rush of cases may come in.

† 'Allotropic' is here used to express the very great difference between the filtered water and the original, not in appearance only, but also in consistency. The Tugela water was absolutely filthy—brown in colour, and of pea-soup consistency, and, being much polluted, contained germs unfavourable to the healing of wounds; besides, the large quantity of mud it held would have acted as an irritant, had not filtration been adopted to purify it.

absolutely necessary to hinder pollution from dust, which is wafted on every breeze. This and the swarms of flies may be termed the curse of Listerism and of the wounded 'Tommy.' If these two nuisances could have been suppressed, the South African campaign would have been relieved of its greatest evils, with the exception of the microbes of enteric and dysentery.

Our work is varied. One moment a host of cases is brought in; then, again, only a straggler; and at times we get a distinct pause and a rest. It was during such a lull, while conversing with Captain Parry, R.A.M.C., and Father Collins, our indefatigable chaplain, outside the operating-tent, that one of those little incidents common to most of our field hospitals at this period of the war occurred. As it is of interest, showing the sense of insecurity such institutions 'enjoyed,' I will record it. Long Tom on Doorn Kloof, for some reason best known to itself, had been dropping its 96-pound shells of solid iron into the hospital, and, as most of them failed to burst, they were ignored by all. At the time to which I refer one struck the ground but a dozen yards from the operating-tent, and, exploding, covered all three of us with dust, nothing more serious hitting us, although I picked up several splinters 1½ inches thick, and its base, a solid lump weighing 20 pounds, close by afterwards. In a few minutes another shell from the same gun came by, which struck the ground just outside the hospital, but failed to burst. A number of stretcher-bearers ran over to secure it for a trophy,* and to see the long

* As an example of the risks run by trophy-hunters looking for shells, the following may be quoted. During the battle of Vaal Krantz, a Kaffir driver ran over to a spot where a Long Tom shell had imbedded itself in the ground and failed to explode. As he was

black burrow it had made in the ground—such is the curiosity of man. A third shell now hurtled along, screaming louder and louder as it approached, and making a truly horrible noise. We all thought it would pass right into the operating-tent, beside which we were standing, and, not wishing my head to be caught in the way, I ducked it involuntarily. Whether my companions did so also I cannot say, for I was too perturbed to notice. As it passed by I looked up to follow its course, which was towards a hospital tent facing me. In front of this tent a man was sitting on an empty box shaving; in his left hand he held a looking-glass, and in the other his razor. From the intent expression on his face, he was evidently too much engaged at his toilet to hear the shell coming. Before a warning shout could be given the shell burst beside him. Razor and glass were dropped, and he fell off the box. Nothing more could be seen in the cloud of smoke and dust that was thrown up. On running up, we found he was uninjured, save for a small self-inflicted cut from the razor!

What was the cause of Long Tom's wrath against this region of the Vaal Krantz valley it is hard to say. Although the hospital was flying its Geneva flag, which must have been visible for miles, I do not think the enemy wilfully fired on it, because, as we were almost surrounded by transport-waggons and cavalry horses, it is more likely that the enemy were endeavouring to hit these, without regarding the hospital. Another object, perhaps, was their would-be target,

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digging it up, another, fired a few seconds afterwards, striking the same place, burst, and carried away one of his lower limbs; this unfortunate man died afterwards from the result of the injury.

the balloon, which had recrossed the river since the day before, and had made another ascent close to Schwartz Kop, and was wobbling backwards and forwards sky-high over our heads for some hours.

During the morning Generals Buller and Warren went to Vaal Krantz to consider the situation. This may be stated briefly. It was impossible to mount guns on Vaal Krantz; it was impossible to assault the Boer position with infantry alone without a loss of perhaps 3,000. This would be bad in itself, but plus the chance of defeat, what would it mean? Let us consider it. The heart of the Empire, the First Army Corps, was in General Buller's army at that time, and he dared not risk it so far forward with a treacherous river behind him and an enemy in fortified positions on each flank. Had he advanced and taken this position at his front, he would have had another engagement at Ibelino, seven miles from the Tugela, where the enemy had another strong position, behind which was the only place where water was obtainable between the Tugela and Ladysmith. If we had to fight the enemy for two or three days to take this position, it would have been necessary to carry water in tanks from the Tugela for about 40,000 beings of all sorts, and suppose by chance the enemy got round our flank and cut us off from the river? Our aerial scout, the balloon, also reported that ridge after ridge commanded Vaal Krantz. Many of these could not be seen from our positions, and, not being marked on the available maps, we were ignorant of their existence. The enemy were also seen bringing up more guns, and placing them in position on the hills. In the afternoon we heard that Vaal Krantz was to be abandoned when darkness set in, and that the third

attempt to relieve Ladysmith was to be given up. Orders were issued for a general retirement of the army to Spearman's and Springfield. The hour fixed for this to commence was 9 p.m., so that we might be enabled to move our transport up the valley under cover of darkness, as its entire length was commanded by the Boer guns. At the hour appointed, as the last half of the troops were hurrying across, their movements were heard by the enemy, and, thinking an attack was in progress, they broke the silence of the night by a terrific discharge of musketry. Some of us at Schwartz Kop thought our forces were making a night attack on Long Tom; their entire position took it up, the dazzling flashes of the rifles lighting up the surrounding hills. Of these Doorn Kloof was particularly noticeable, as the enemy had evidently posted a strong guard to protect their Long Tom from such an attack. The firing did not last long, and soon silence reigned, save for some individual sniper aiming at an imaginary foe, but presently he got tired and all was still. By midnight all were across, and shortly after this the pontoon was taken up and moved away.

Throughout the night, we in the bivouacs under Schwartz Kop were kept awake by the movements of the troops, as they passed by on their way towards Springfield, viâ Spearman's Hill, the steady tramp, tramp of the infantry being varied at dawn by the jingle, jingle of the chains of the waggons; such noises made sleep impossible. On the morning of February 7 some of the British batteries were left in positions commanding the river, in order to cover the retirement of the remainder of the force; this was, however, undisputed by the enemy, except by long-range artillery-

fire, which did but little harm. The 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery was left with Hart's Brigade, and 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, which had arrived recently from Umballa, and which was under the command of Major E. A. Burrows, was another battery left behind to cover the general retirement; it had taken up a position on Gun Hill near Mount Alice. It fired a few rounds of shrapnel at a range of 3,500 yards at a party of Boers, probably a band of looters, who had ventured down to the ground recently occupied by the infantry on Vaal Krantz. Beyond this range, the Field Artillery guns with which this battery was armed were unable to burst time shrapnel at this period of the campaign, for in those days they had no 'blue-nosed' fuses.* South of the river, close to Potgeiter's Drift, the Army Service Corps had a busy morning, removing and loading upon ox-waggons a vast accumulation of stores which had been concentrated there, such as huge stacks of 'bully beef' and biscuit-boxes, compressed forage and medical comforts.

* The first fuses issued had their 'noses' painted yellow; later on a fuse allowing of longer range of bursting was issued; to distinguish this, its nose was painted blue. At Vaal Krantz, for this reason, the Field Artillery were handicapped; at Pieter's Hill, and again at Bergendal, it was different; in these engagements they were able to reach the enemy and make them keep their fire down, which is the most that can be expected from shrapnel against troops in such trenches as the Boers had; and here again the artillery, by lengthening their range and fuse, were able to send their shells well over the heads of the infantry, even when they were advancing to the final assault. In considering the required range for field-guns, it must be remembered that artillery ought not only to be able to reach the enemy from their position, but also to fire well over his trenches, so that they may not have to cease firing as their own infantry reach it, and may thus be able to harass the enemy in their retreat.

Such a task, at any time a laborious one, was now rendered even more so by the spiteful action of the enemy's long-range guns, which were firing about everywhere—promiscuously. Yet the gallant Army Service Corps—'Tommy's' best friend—worked hard, and not a pound of stores did they leave behind.

Close by was the Eleventh Brigade Hospital—noted at all times for the splendid way in which it carried out its work; it was now all bustle, as the sick and wounded were being removed. Major Moir, R.A.M.C., its Commanding Officer, had sent for and received about 500 Indian stretcher-bearers; these, with their dhoolies and tongas, were drawn up alongside of about the same number of Colonel Gallwey's Colonial Stretcher Corps, and as I rode up presented a most animated and picturesque group. I had been sent with a train of ambulance-waggons to assist in the evacuation. The hospital had been pitched in what was probably the most picturesque locality of the Vaal Krantz valley: it lay under a steep, rugged hill, wooded by mimosa and cacti; the very tents were sheltered by mimosa-bushes, forming quite a rural camp. Grouped all round were the dhoolie-bearers, their dark skins, lightly-built frames, and many coloured raiment, such as Indians love to wear, impressing the spectator with the thought that here again were representatives of the mighty British Empire. Let not the public forget what Great Britain owes to her colonies.

With such an array of stretcher-bearers and ambulances, and with a long, steep, dusty, uphill march to Spearman's Camp before them, is it any wonder that some of the 'Tommies,' who were neither very sick nor very badly wounded, should have hesitated when

told to 'follow on' behind the ambulances? I was standing beside such a group while mine were being laden with the severer cases. Some of the walking men were discussing the order. 'Why foot-slog,' says one, 'when you can get a ride in a blooming 'bus?' 'Penny all the way to 'Ampstead,' says another. 'Any 'ansoms?' says a third. And so the good-humoured banter went on. Long Tom on Doorn Kloof came to our assistance. Whirr-r! bang! a shell bursts close by—within the hospital. 'Guess, chum, we'd better start,' says one man. 'You bet, chum,' says another. 'The blooming bloke says walk: let's walk,' says a third. And after a last lingering look at the ambulances, off they trudge. Later on, half-way up the hill, we see them again, alongside the dusty road; some energetic canteen-owner has erected a tent, and is doing a brisk trade, as for many it is a half-way house for a drink of temperance ale: no other beverage is allowed by General Buller to be sold at the canteens. Here a group of weary 'foot-sloggers' have stopped, and are seen refreshing themselves with non-intoxicant beer at sixpence a small bottle; others are eating biscuits out of air-tight tins, 1s. 6d. per tin; another is using a piece of stick, as a substitute for a better implement, to get at tinned salmon. And thus the army spends some of its hard-earned 'bob a day' in the field. What matter?—the customers have been confined to 'bully' and biscuit for the last week, and can afford it. At the top of the hill we stop the ambulances, and give as many as can be seated a rest as far as Spearman's.

At Spearman's a vast array of canvas meets our eye; here every available tent has been given over by the military to the doctors. We stop at Major

Kirkpatrick's Hospital, No. 4 Stationary, as it is called; in reality it is 'stationary' in name, and nothing else, being as mobile as a field hospital. We are met by Majors Kelly and Mallins, R.A.M.C., both members of the Staff; a sergeant-major, armed with a huge note-book, takes the names and other particulars of the cases as they are moved off to the various tents or marquees.

Mr. Frederick Treves, the eminent London surgeon, who has left home and country at the nation's call, strolls over and converses with one and all when our charges are comfortably settled in beds, with snowy sheets, to which they have been foreign for many a month; then we are invited into the mess tent to partake of some refreshment. After the meal we are shown round the hospital; several sisters of the Army Nursing Service are busy comforting their patients.* One is writing a letter for a dying soldier; he, poor fellow! is a hopeless case—a severe internal injury from a pom-pom shell. He lies propped up in bed, and with broken speech dictates this, his last letter.

As evening is coming on, we inspan and drive our ambulances away to the camping-ground allotted for the bearer company.

* During the Vaal Krantz operations from February 5 to 7, the following casualties occurred: Killed, 2 officers and 23 men; wounded, 18 officers and 326 men; missing, 5 men; total, 374.

CHAPTER V

THE ENGAGEMENTS ROUND COLENSO

FEBRUARY 13-19

Chieveley Camp—General Buller's Final Advance to the Relief of Ladysmith from Chieveley—The First Seven Days of the Fighting—Hussar Hill—Cingolo—Monte Cristo—'How the Key to Ladysmith was captured'—Hlangwane.

WHILE the main body of General Buller's army was concentrated at Chieveley Camp, under canvas, feeding on fresh beef and bread, with which they had long been unfamiliar, about 4,000 of the enemy were being retained at Potgeiter's Drift by a gallant little force entrenched at Springfield, who were still enduring all the hardships of active campaigning. This force consisted of Burn-Murdoch's Brigade of Cavalry, the Chestnut Battery Royal Horse Artillery, two naval 12-pounders, and two battalions of infantry. On February 11 Bethune's Mounted Infantry were detached from Dundonald's Brigade and sent to watch the line of the Tugela north of Greytown. This was done to prevent any Boer raid in the direction of Weenen, and they accomplished this duty most thoroughly.

On February 12 the outposts at Springfield encountered a party of Boers under General Botha in person, who had crossed the Tugela to inspect the

position vacated by our troops. The Boers, getting the crest of a hill first, opened a heavy fire on the squadron, who were on very rough ground and had to retire, but finally dispersed the enemy after having received reinforcements. While the Boer Commander-in-Chief was reconnoitring one end of the British position in person, General Buller was similarly engaged at the other end of the Boer position. It was like a game of hide-and-seek.

At 8 a.m. Lord Dundonald, in command of 700 mounted men, the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the 64th Royal Field Artillery, left Chieveley to make a reconnaissance towards Colenso. The rendezvous aimed at was some high ground about five miles south-west of Colenso, known as Hussar Hill, an eminence facing Monte Cristo and Cingolo, and getting its name from the fact that a patrol of the 13th Hussars had been surprised there six weeks previously. Since then the enemy had been in the habit of visiting it daily. Dundonald found it occupied this morning, but the enemy cleared off, after a short resistance, leaving two of their men wounded. Shortly after General Buller arrived, and from the top spent some time in a careful study, through his telescope, of the position held by the Boers, especially Hlangwane, which they had occupied. At one o'clock the force, having achieved its object, returned towards Chieveley Camp; and the enemy, who up to this had been lying low in silence, returned to the hill in considerable numbers, and started a heavy rifle-fire, which was just as briskly replied to by all arms of Dundonald's force. Both sides suffered a few casualties, in our case there being a dozen wounded, including Lieutenant J. Churchill, S.A.L.H.; our opponents' loss was not

GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA AND HIS STAFF.

Boer Photo.

known, but one dead Boer was found on the ground two days later.

The 13th was so intensely hot that General Buller did not make any forward movement. On this date I received orders to take over the medical charge of the Rifle Reserve Battalion, a regiment composed mainly of reservists of those battalions of the King's Royal Rifles and Rifle Brigade who were at this time in beleaguered Ladysmith, and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, C.M.G., D.S.O. As I was informed that the regiment was to march out on the morrow, I spent the afternoon inspecting the medical and surgical equipment, also replenishing bandages and medicines from the Advance Medical Depôt, which was attached to Major Kirkpatrick's Field Hospital, under Lieutenant J. B. Short, R.A.M.C. Absolute secrecy was maintained, however, by headquarters as to where we were going and what was to be done; a day's outing, with perhaps, at the most, a reconnaissance, was hinted at. I had been misled by such a story before, during the Spion Kop expedition from Springfield, when I left many necessaries behind, so I determined not to be caught napping this time.

In the gray dawn of the 14th, regiment after regiment silently stood to arms, and marched out from Chieveley Camp. Their objective was Hussar Hill, about five miles to the north of Chieveley, which had been occupied by the enemy. The route taken was on the east side of the railway. The force was joined on the march by other troops, who had moved out during the night. General Hart's Brigade was left behind to hold Gun Hill, Chieveley, and the southern line of railway; and Burn-Murdoch's Brigade with 'A' Battery

Royal Horse Artillery was left at Springfield to watch the left flank, but with these exceptions General Buller's entire force was on the move.

LIST OF FORCES SENT FORWARD FROM CHIEVELEY ON FEBRUARY 14.

SECOND MOUNTED BRIGADE (Colonel the Earl of Dundonald).
- South African Light Horse.
- Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry.
- Composite Regiment of Mounted Infantry, which included—
- 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, Mounted Infantry Company.
- 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Mounted Infantry Section.
- Natal Police Detachment.
- Natal Carbineers, one squadron.
- Imperial Light Horse, one squadron.

SECOND DIVISION (Major-General Hon. N. G. Lyttelton, C.B.).

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.
- 13th Hussars, one troop.
- 17th Company Royal Engineers.
- Brigade Division Royal Field Artillery, which included—
- 7th, 63rd and 64th Batteries Royal Field Artillery.
- Divisional Ammunition Column.

SECOND BRIGADE (Major-General Hildyard, C.B.).
- 2nd Battalion West Surrey Regiment.
- 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment.
- 2nd Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment.
- 2nd Battalion East Surrey Regiment.

FOURTH BRIGADE (Colonel Norcott, 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, commanding).
- 2nd Battalion Scottish Rifles.
- 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps.
- 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry.
- 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade.

FIFTH DIVISION (Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Warren, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.).

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

1st Royal Dragoons, one troop.
37th Company Royal Engineers.
Brigade Division Royal Field Artillery, which included—.
28th, 73rd and 78th Batteries Royal Field Artillery.
Divisional Ammunition Column.

TENTH BRIGADE (Major-General Talbot Coke).
2nd Battalion Somersetshire Light Infantry.
2nd Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment.
2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment.

ELEVENTH BRIGADE (Major-General A. S. Wynne, C.B.).
2nd Battalion Royal Lancaster Regiment.
1st Battalion South Lancashire Regiment.
Rifle Reserve Battalion.

SIXTH BRIGADE, attached Fifth Division (Major-General Barton, C.B.).
2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers.
2nd Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers.
1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers.
2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers.

CORPS TROOPS.

61st Howitzer Battery Royal Field Artillery.
Two 5-inch guns (16th Company, Southern Division, Royal Garrison Artillery).
Four naval 12-pounder guns.
Detachment Section, Telegraph Division, Royal Engineers.
Corps Troops, Ammunition Column.

REINFORCEMENTS DESPATCHED AFTER FEBRUARY 14.

February 17.—Two 5-inch guns (16th Company, Southern Division, Royal Garrison Artillery).

February 18.—19th Battery Royal Field Artillery.

February 19.—Two 4·7-inch naval guns (travelling carriages).

February 20.—Four naval 12-pounders; 4th Mountain Battery; Pontoon Troop Royal Engineers; Balloon Section Royal Engineers.

February 22.—FIFTH BRIGADE (Major-General Hart).
Inniskilling Fusiliers.
Connaught Rangers.
Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
Imperial Light Infantry.

February 22.—FIRST CAVALRY BRIGADE (Colonel Burn-Murdoch).
1st (Royal) Dragoons.
13th Hussars.
Headquarters and two squadrons 14th Hussars.
'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery.
February 25.—Two 4·7-inch naval guns on platform mountings.
February 26.—1st Battalion Border Regiment.
February 27.—1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment.

At about 8.30 a.m. Dundonald's Brigade secured Hussar Hill. The Boers tried to dispute the possession of it, but the South African Light Horse, by a smart piece of work securing a commanding ridge, brought up four Colt guns and poured a deadly fire into all the dongas in which the enemy were concealed, and they were compelled to retire. Meanwhile General Lyttelton's force worked round on the right, and General Warren's advanced in front and on the left. In close proximity to the Boer position the central force halted. The Rifle Reserve Battalion at once set to entrenching themselves, the men forming up in lines, and passing along rocks from hand to hand to others who were digging trenches or building sangars under observation of the company officers, who were taking their share of that work. This method of sangar-making, though ingenious and rapid, is not without danger, as it not only tires the men, and leaves them liable to heat-stroke on a hot day, but may also lead to cases of hernia. Two such cases came under my notice on this occasion—both fresh ones, and caused by men trying to lift stones of greater bulk and weight than should have been attempted. While watching the entrenching operations, I noticed General Buller a few hundred yards away on the top of the kopje; he was resting against a withered tree, and scanning the Boer position through his telescope.

"The artillery opened fire towards mid-day, and the enemy returned the fire with several guns. Meanwhile General Lyttelton had advanced along the Blue Krantz valley, and was sharply engaged with some of the enemy, who had established themselves in the thick bush and rocks. The firing was heard by the Ladysmith garrison, and they signalled that 'the Boer camp at Taba Myama had broken up.' This showed that the Boers had appreciated the general advance, and were going to concentrate in front of us.

The next two days, like the 14th, were so hot that no infantry movements on any scale were advisable; as it was, several cases of heat-stroke occurred, and water for drinking was very scanty; it had to come by train from down-country to Chieveley, and thence to the troops in tanks on ox-waggons.

Early on the 15th the enemy shelled the bivouacking troops, but did no damage. Later on General Buller extended his position to the right by the occupation, after some opposition, of Moord Kraal, and commenced a steady artillery fire, which was directed chiefly from Hussar Hill. On this were placed the two 5-inch and five naval 12-pounders, in addition to some field batteries. The Rifle Reserve Battalion moved out to the left flank for the night. We had our officers' headquarters beside some deserted kraals and a looted farm. The latter place was a perfect wreck, all the furniture broken, and the floors littered with torn books, letters, and photographs belonging to some recent loyal Natalian; amongst the débris lay the family Bible, torn and desecrated. Several small parties of Boers kept our outposts active all night: they had crawled up the dongas from the village of

Colenso, and kept sniping us from the cover of some adjacent mealie-fields as we slept.

On the 16th the infantry outposts were pushed forward as far as the Gomba stream, and a portion of Cingolo mountain was reconnoitred by some of Dundonald's Brigade, which was engaged in protecting both flanks of the army and its line of communication with the railway at Chieveley. A steady bombardment was kept up by our artillery all day, their fire being chiefly concentrated on Green Hill; the enemy, who were being reinforced, replied with some half-dozen guns. Lukas Meyer wired to Pretoria on this day that 'heavy fighting is proceeding at Blue Kranz, the British being in overwhelming numbers; all the Federal positions are maintained at present.'

On the 17th Sir Redvers Buller began his final advance on the Boer positions, General Lyttelton with the Second Division attacking Cingolo Hill and Nek, while Lord Dundonald's orders were to remain in rear of the flanks of the infantry and see that they were not rushed, also to take any available chance. Had he remained strictly in this position he would probably have seen no fighting. Taking two regiments with him, the Composite Regiment and the South African Light Horse, he started at daybreak to get round in rear of the enemy's position on Cingolo, and attack him from behind, sending all his wheeled guns and ammunition carts to the infantry. He made a long détour across the Blau Krantz valley to the south and east, threading his way for four hours, concealed by the bushes and scrub. In this manner he got to the south-eastern slopes of Cingolo without attracting attention. His climb now began, and a difficult climb it was, the hill being very steep and covered with a

dense undergrowth of bushes, with huge masses of rock piled in wild confusion, over which the horses had to scramble as best they could. Riding was impossible; all led their horses, and slowly but surely the top plateau was neared. The last part of the ascent was in single file, along a path so narrow and overhung with branches that the loads were being continually dragged off the ammunition ponies. Such an advance up a hill, known to be held by the enemy, was one of extreme danger, alike in its conception and its execution; it was a bold stroke in a great game. Fortunately, the movement was not opposed, probably because the attention of the defenders was taken up by the advance of the infantry towards the western sides of the mountain, and a small plateau was found near the top of the hill, protected by some rocks from the heights above. One squadron only was formed up, when the Mausers began to speak. This squadron at once dashed forward on the left and secured the high ground from the enemy, who, completely surprised, fled and took up a position further back, from which they opened a hot fire. More squadrons being now formed up, our men, reinforced again, made a rush forward, and, not knowing how few were opposing them, the Boers' retreat soon became a regular running fight for two miles along Cingolo, one set of trenches after another being taken in rear by our men. While one of Lord Dundonald's regiments was thus engaged with the enemy along the top ridge of the hill, the other regiment, the South African Light Horse, made a debouch to the right flank, and, working roughly parallel with the top, completed the business. The infantry, meanwhile, was advancing against Cingolo,

but as our mounted men had now swept the hill, only one regiment, the Queen's, came up on the south-western end, and a terrible clamber they had. The day being hot, there was much suffering from lack of water. What the loss from a direct attack would have been with Boers in the trenches on Cingolo, with a safe line of retreat such as the Boers love, it is impossible to say; but it would have been very heavy, so that the end well justified the means. Luck also favoured the enterprise, for had the enemy not been watching the infantry advance on the west, finding out Dundonald's advance just too late, the casualties of our mounted men on that day would have told a very different tale. Thus was Cingolo Hill taken.

During the day the Rifle Reserve Battalion were moved to the eastern slopes of Hussar Hill, where they took up a position beside the Royal Lancaster Regiment. Our situation here was not an enviable one, as we lay around and behind the artillery, who drew a considerable amount of the enemy's shell-fire. Notwithstanding admirable sand-bag embrasures, the naval men suffered to some extent. One shell, which came from a Long Tom mounted during the night, knocked over six out of seven naval gunners, killing two and wounding four, the infantry, as is the rule, getting all the stray shells into their bivouacs on the slopes; they had, however, a little compensation, as some of them did a brisk trade with a neighbouring field force canteen, which was buying up all unexploded shells for the trophy-hunters in Maritzburg and Durban. A unique case of surgical interest presented itself to me during the day. A Kaffir driver, wielding a long bamboo-handled whip of the ordinary colonial type used for driving oxen, came under

shell-fire. Not appreciating such a display, and eager to get by as quickly as he possibly could, he let out a long string of Kaffir adjectives at the oxen, and followed this up with a ferocious lash of his whip at the foremost ox of his team. By some chance the tail of the lash caught in the bough of a mimosa-bush behind him, and the impetus of the blow was of such violence that the upper bone of the man's arm broke below the shoulder-joint with a crack clearly audible to me, though I was standing some twenty paces away. I put his arm in splints, and sent him to one of the field hospitals in the rear.

During the afternoon the 64th Royal Field Artillery was sent across the Gomba valley, there to support a flank attack, which had been arranged for the following day. At nightfall the Fourth Brigade held a position half-way between the Gomba spruit and the Nek, and the West Surreys bivouacked for the night on the northern crests of Cingolo. We all went to sleep 'cheery' that night, in anticipation of the morrow, which was fated to place the key of Ladysmith in our hands.

At dawn on Sunday morning, the 18th, the enemy 'opened the ball' with their guns by shelling the troops on the sides of Cingolo; however, they did little damage, sangars having been built by our men during the night. At eight o'clock Hildyard's Brigade crossed the Nek, the West Yorks leading, the Queen's and East Surreys supporting, and attacked Monte Cristo. Captain T. H. Berney, of the West Yorks, leading the assault, was the first man up, but was unfortunately shot in the head as he gallantly reached the top. The Boers then bolted before our infantry got a chance of using their bayonets. Our men pushed forward with a rush and an enthusiastic

cheer, and gained the steep crags of the summit. This action drew a shrapnel-fire from the enemy's guns on Hlangwane, which lay to their left; and while they took cover our artillery shelled the more distant hills, the heavy guns being chiefly in action, as the range of the enemy's position was too far for the Field Artillery at this period of the day. In a short time the Boer artillery was silenced.

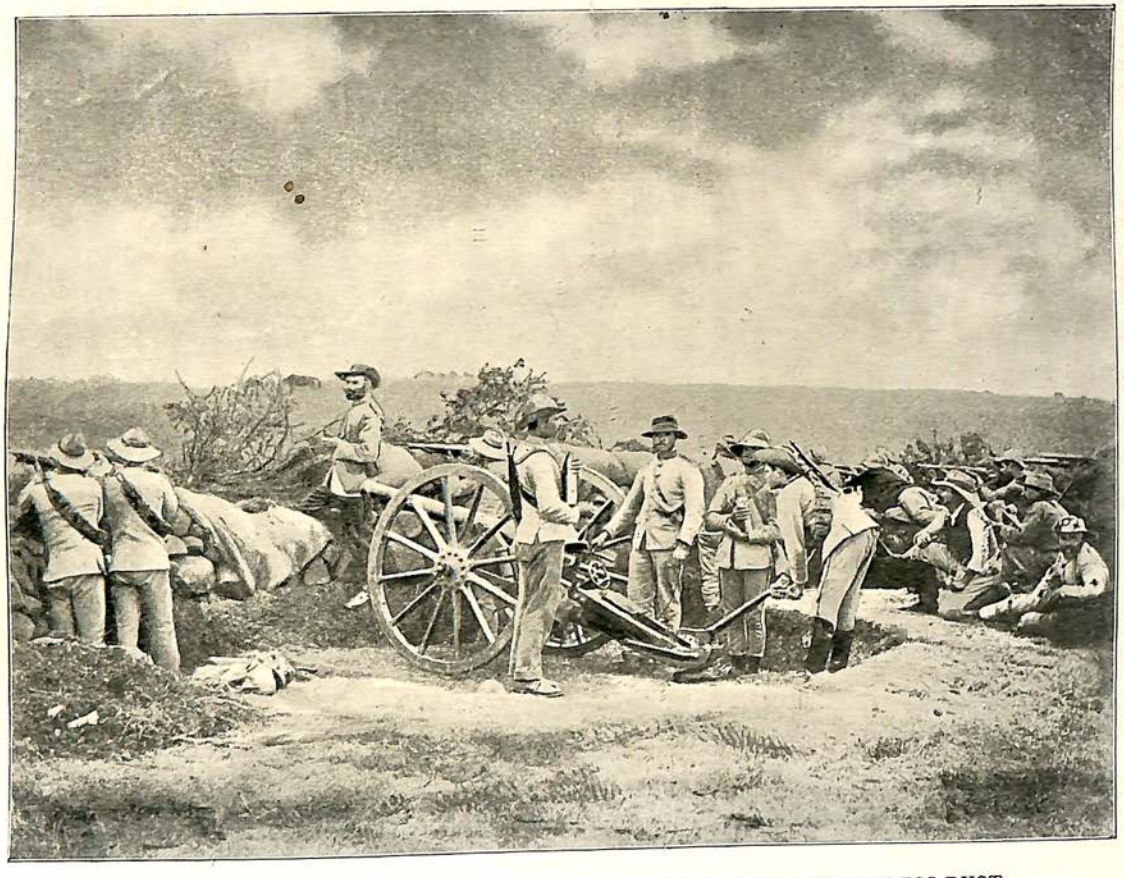
General Lyttelton now advanced Norcott's Brigade, and the Rifle Brigade worked forward along the western slopes towards the back of the enemy's position, the Royal Welch Fusiliers, supported by General Warren, who sent Barton's Brigade forward, assailing the eastern flank. At the same time Dundonald's Brigade watched the western slopes, and drove back those of the enemy who went there to escape from the effects of our guns. They were assaulted by a heavy artillery fire on their front and flank, attacked on their flank and rear, and made but a slight resistance. The combining of our forces was the signal for hearty cheering, which was increased when the 7th Battery Royal Field Artillery arrived in support of the 64th Royal Field Artillery, for 'Tommy' loves the gunners. The position was carried by the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and abandoned precipitately by the enemy, who left behind a large quantity of material, many dead and wounded, and a few prisoners. This occurred before mid-day. A well-earned rest followed, and the work of entrenching commenced. One of the prisoners, named Constantine von Braun, claimed to be a Colonel in the Prussian Army. He wore an oilskin coat with steel netting.

Throughout this attack, which was made in echelon from the right, the naval guns under Captain

Jones, R.N., and the Royal Artillery under Colonel Parsons, R.A., rendered the greatest possible assistance, shelling the successive positions until the enemy closed on them. General Buller, noting that our troops, who were now firmly planted on Monte Cristo, both enfiladed and commanded Green Hill, with its two miles of Boer trenches, had ordered a frontal advance. But our opponents were not to be caught napping, and very wisely had evacuated this position, hurriedly crossing the Tugela in great disorder, and leaving several of their camps, with waggon-loads of ammunition, stores and supplies, in our hands. The troops were in excellent spirits, being much gratified with their achievements, and, despite the great heat and scarcity of water, were anxious to continue. One could hear them expressing wishes that, tired as they were, they could start in pursuit. Nevertheless, the men wanted water; roads had to be made across the Gomba valley for our artillery and transport, and owing to the nature of the country intercommunication between units was difficult; so General Buller determined to let them bivouac where they stood, and bring up the rest of the force and other guns during the night. We had done very well, notwithstanding a casualty list of over a hundred. We had taken a formidable position in Monte Cristo; the key to Ladysmith was in our hands; we had three brigades and two batteries right across the enemy's centre; but there was still a strong position on Hlangwane, facing us, about two and a quarter miles to our front, and on our right the river-bank. These, taken together, made a formidable obstacle in a difficult country. The weather was intensely hot, and the ground traversed exceedingly awkward; but the

energy and dash of the troops was very pleasant to see, and all had done well. When such is the case, it is hard to select, but the work done by Dundonald's Cavalry, the Queen's, the Scots Fusiliers, and the Rifle Brigade, was perhaps the most noticeable, while the steadiness of the gunners and the excellent practice of the guns, both naval and military, were superb. It should be added that the infantry received considerable help from the fire of the long-range naval guns at Chieveley.

Ladysmith garrison watched the shelling of the enemy's position all day with intense satisfaction. Even the British infantry were observable thence while making the ascent of the hill. The besieged heliographed to Weenen to this effect, and added that there was a splendid position on Asvogel Krantz, which, if seized, would command the railway to Nelthorpe, besides the back, and perhaps even the summit, of Bulwana Hill. I had an opportunity of walking over Green Hill, Monte Cristo, and Cingolo during the afternoon, and examining the Boer position. Green Hill I first visited; its grassy slopes were 'pock-marked' with holes from our shells, the ground being one mass of pieces of shell in the form of iron splinters, copper driving-bands, and shrapnel bullets. 'A bull in a china-shop,' speaking figuratively, could scarcely make such a litter. The trees, bushes, rocks, and ground were distorted by lyddite. Here a tree cut across, its trunk strangely twisted and stained yellow; there a boulder, large enough for four men to hide behind, had been struck and split into segments, separated by great brimstone-smelling fissures. The path of lyddite could be easily traced, for everything within some distance of its explosion is stained a



BOERS CONCEALING GUNS BEHIND BUSHES. SACKING USED TO SUPPRESS DUST.

Boer photo.

canary yellow colour. The Boer trenches on Green Hill and the adjacent hills, which we had taken, extended over an area of more than two miles. They were a marvellous example of the ingenuity, cunning, and patience of the enemy with which we had to deal. Looking at the entrenchments from the British side, even with a powerful telescope, one would be deceived, so artfully were they concealed by a facing of bushes or sods, so well put together and matching the surrounding ground that it was almost impossible to detect any irregularity of surface. On close examination, these trenches proved so interesting that I think them worthy of a short description. As the surface soil was extremely shallow—not 6 inches in places—and as the trenches were sunk to the depth of about 5 feet, they had for the most part to be hewn out of the solid rock. This seemed to have been done entirely by manual labour, as marks of picks were apparent on the stone. The sites selected were chiefly just along the sky-lines, but if a means of communication existed from the side of a trench with the back of a kopje, two, or even three rows of trenches might be present one above the other. Although there were some two miles of trenches, none of them were straight, but cut in zigzag fashion to avoid enfilading fire; many had traverses also for this purpose, and in some the traverses were tunnelled in such a way as to allow of communication between one trench and the next. The width of the trenches at the top was never more than 2½ feet, and they widened out at the bottom to nearly 4 feet, being, in fact, so hollowed out as to afford excellent shelter against shell-fire. The clay and rocks removed to make the excavation were thrown up in front in the form of a solid embankment, which was in many

cases surmounted by sacks full of clay, with sods, cut grass, and bushes in front to conceal the ridge. The bottom of the trench was strewn with hay or straw for comfort, enabling the occupants to sleep there at night, and many were roofed over either with beams of wood, having sacks of clay between, to protect the occupants from shell-fire, or with sheets of corrugated zinc, torn from the roofs of our colonists' houses in Colenso, to afford shelter from the sun.

The following casualties were reported by General Buller as having occurred between February 15 and 18: Officers—1 killed, 8 wounded; men—13 killed, 155 wounded, 2 missing; a full total of 179.

On the 19th the Second and Fifth Divisions moved forward along the south bank of the Tugela, and the Sixth Brigade, under General Barton, occupied Hlangwane Hill, after a short but sharp skirmish. While our troops were lying among the rocks on the eastern side of the hill the enemy brought some pom-poms and Creusots into action, which enfiladed them from the north. Some Boers similarly placed on the western slope of the same hill were enfiladed by our artillery. The hill was for a short time enveloped in thick smoke from the bursting shells of the artillery of the opposing army, this being materially increased by the dry grass and scrub taking fire. The infantry behaved with great gallantry. Captain W. L. Thorburn, of the Royal Fusiliers, continued to direct the advance of his men after receiving a mortal wound in the abdomen. Sergeant E. Ford, of the West Yorks, when both his company officers were shot, took their place and commanded with cool judgment and courage.

On Hlangwane being taken, the enemy crossed the Tugela to the north, and practically evacuated Colenso.

The trenches south of the Tugela were now all in our hands. At the rear of Hlangwane we found a big Boer camp, which was captured. Among the tents standing I noticed one, a rather large marquee; this had been looted from the British hospital equipment which was captured from us by the enemy at Dundee, after the battle of Talana Hill, and had been used by them as a headquarters tent for General Botha. A considerable quantity of food was also found—flour, potatoes, bags of rusks and meat, some of the latter in pots on still smouldering fires; to all appearance the Boers were well provided with good food. I never saw such a variety of rubbish as lay about both in the laager and in the trenches: old clothes, old boots, and tin cans were strewn everywhere; among the débris were also picked up pairs of corsets, pieces of crape, and other feminine gear. I heard that a letter was found from Joubert to General Fourie, evidently in reply to a request from the latter for help. Joubert stated his regret at not being able to comply with Fourie's wish, as he had 3,000 men put out of action in the direction of Spion Kop. The Boers also left behind about 1,700 new picks and shovels, and about 60 horses. The amount of Mauser ammunition abandoned by them in the trenches was very considerable, and I had an opportunity of picking out from amongst it specimens of the following illegal articles: soft-nosed, flat-nosed, split-nosed rifle bullets; also the cupped man-stopping revolver ammunition. All these bullets are but varieties of what are called 'expanding bullets,' often erroneously described in the press as 'explosive bullets.' The wounds they produce are of such a barbaric and ghastly nature that their use in war is forbidden by international law. During the day our

heavy guns were moved to the north end of Monte Cristo, and the addition to the force of two more 4·7 naval guns on travelling-carriages was decidedly welcome. It has been suggested (Major Callwell, R.A., in 'Proceedings R.A.I.') that had some of our long-range guns been placed on Monte Cristo the Boer retreat might possibly have been made more difficult. In favour of this view is the fact that their main line of retreat lay over a temporary bridge, which they had built close to and within range of this hill.

All through the afternoon and on to dusk in the evening, looking through our glasses in the direction of the Colenso-Ladysmith road, vast clouds of dust met our eyes, and gave rise to much discussion. It was apparent that an important change in the disposition of the enemy's forces was in progress. Some said it was the arrival of reinforcements; others, that it was merely a change of front; but the majority were of opinion that a general retreat was in progress. Major Stuart-Wortley was one of the officers holding this last opinion; he obtained permission from General Buller to advance on Colenso village during the night, and endeavour to occupy it by dawn the following morning. During the night the enemy kept flashing the rays of a search-light which they had mounted near Colenso on the positions occupied by our troops, showing that they evidently anticipated a night attack, but a few shells from our naval guns fired in the direction of the apparatus made them cease. There were seventeen casualties among our troops during this day.

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CHAPTER VI

THE ENGAGEMENTS ROUND HART'S HILL

FEBRUARY 20–25

The Third Crossing of the Tugela—Colenso—February 20, 1900—The Occupation of Colenso—Four more consecutive days' Fighting—Onderbrook Spruit—Wynne's Hill—Langerwachte Spruit—Hedge Hill—Hart's Hill—'How the Inniskillings were almost annihilated'—Back again across the Tugela.

SOME hours before the dawn of February 20 the Rifle Reserve Battalion marched out from their bivouac on the village of Colenso, with the Royal Lancaster Regiment acting as supports. As anticipated, Colenso was weakly held; a few Boers in the village fled, and after a small amount of desultory rifle-fire the place was in our possession. Shortly after daybreak, while the men were preparing their breakfasts, an alarm was given to the effect that a considerable force was advancing on our outposts from the direction of Chieveley. At the same time the 6-inch gun at Chieveley fired, and a shell burst close by in the village. Our glasses, however, showed that the advancing men were clothed in khaki, and that they were not burghers. As they neared we could make out the scouts, advance-guard, flankers, and supports, and in the van rode an officer, with polished straps

and sword glittering in the morning sun. This was General Fitzroy Hart, and the troops were the gallant Irish Brigade. We immediately got into signalling communication with them, and with General Buller's headquarters, and received a message from the latter place to withdraw and leave General Hart in possession. After breakfast I had a walk round Colenso and its environs south of the Tugela, which were historically interesting on account of the action of December 15. The village had been shamefully looted and polluted. What had once been a peaceful and picturesque little hamlet was now a mass of fœtid ruins. In anticipation of our occupation, the enemy had dragged their dead horses* into the interior of the houses, and they lay in the rooms among broken furniture and débris. The corrugated-zinc roofs had been torn off the buildings, all the available woodwork had been removed for fuel, windows and doors were wantonly smashed. In front of the village lay the lines of trenches from which on the date of the battle there had come that deadly hail of bullets which had caused the loss of our two batteries. The donga from which Major Babtie, R.A.M.C., had sortied and gained his Victoria Cross was still littered with the accoutrements of our men and artillery horses. During the afternoon some of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry forded the drift at Colenso, and occupied the kopjes unopposed, with the exception of a few sniping shots, but were afterwards driven out. Welcome reinforcements arrived in the course of the day in the form of

* Some Boer prisoners were afterwards employed, while waiting for their train to Durban, by the officer in charge to drag these putrid horses away and bury them; thus the 'biter was bit,' for the work was anything but pleasant, the stench being intolerable.

four naval 12-pounders, the 4th Mountain Battery, and the Pontoon and Balloon Sections Royal Engineers. The south side of the Tugela was then entirely cleared of the enemy, and a heavy battery established on the spurs of Hlangwane.

General Buller now determined to cross the Tugela. This was his third crossing, for it will be remembered that his first was at Trichardt's Drift (January 17), and his second at Potgeiter's Drift and Molen's Drift (February 5); it was not fated, however, to be his final crossing, as we shall see hereafter.

He determined to cross from the Hlangwane plateau. To ford the river it was necessary to throw a pontoon bridge across, as both the railway and the ordinary road bridge had been destroyed, and would require a long time for repair. It will be seen by the map facing p. 198 that the main road from Colenso to Ladysmith passes west of Colenso and the Tugela; another path runs close to the western side of the railway, and is represented by a dotted line. To reach either of these he could cross the river at Colenso, where the river runs north and south—an easy route—or further down at Railway Hill, nearer Ladysmith, where it runs east and west. To cross at the latter place it would be necessary to spend valuable time in road-making, the country being very rugged, and the banks of the river precipitous. In favour of crossing at Colenso: firstly, it could be done more quickly; secondly, a well-constructed road lay at the other side; and, thirdly, the Intelligence Department reported—and of this there was ocular evidence—that the enemy were in full retreat. Against the crossing at Colenso was the fact that the army would have to move up a triangular defile commanded by precipitous hills like Doorn

Kloof, from which the enemy could enfilade our troops with guns, so placed as to be under cover from our artillery on Monte Cristo and Hlangwane. A crossing at Railway Hill in preference to Colenso had been strongly advocated. In support of this was urged the absolute safeness of that route, as the crossing would be commanded on all sides by our guns, and the enemy could make no opposition except with his artillery. The fact that our troops could get on the line and advance along the railroad was another supposed advantage. Against these suggestions were opposed, firstly, the delay in making a new road, and, secondly, the fact that the railroad was useless, as we had neither any rolling-stock nor the means of putting any on it, for the line was disconnected from the south by the destruction of Colenso railway-bridge. I have discussed this subject at some length on account of its bearing on future events. General Buller determined finally to cross at Colenso, and we shall see the consequences that followed.

The Engineers threw a pontoon bridge across the Tugela about a quarter of a mile north of Fort Wylie; the river here was about 98 yards wide, and the water of considerable depth, with a strong current. The Fifth Division were the first to cross, General Coke's Brigade getting orders to reconnoitre the hills north of Fort Wylie, and then to advance for the same purpose towards Onderbrook Spruit. The Eleventh Brigade, after a circuitous and weary march under a blazing sun, passed along the new road from the Gomba valley, and crossed the pontoon early in the morning. During a halt near Fort Wylie I was able to examine this hill. It was honeycombed with trenches, delved out of the rocky hillside, and affording

perfect shelter from shell-fire, thus accounting for the enemy enduring so much of it. Miles of trenches also lined the river-bank, and, owing to the presence of a network of dongas, which joined the river at right angles, the entrance and exit of Boers could not be seen. Another rural camp lay behind Fort Wylie, composed of huts, partly made of loose stones, sods and bushes, with dry ox-hides spread over them; some were roofed with loose sheets of corrugated zinc, others with doors torn from buildings; all sorts of household utensils and furniture lay about—chairs, sofas, pianos, tables and beds. One of the last-named, a double one, I saw set up under a tree, with its late occupant's portmanteau open upon it—he had evidently left in a hurry. Food and ammunition were strewn everywhere. Some Royal Engineers were already engaged in repairing the railway-line, a train for this purpose having arrived at Colenso from Chieveley. The Colenso railway-bridge was a perfect ruin, the whole five spans of ironwork having been blown to pieces with dynamite by the enemy, and one stone pillar entirely demolished. A temporary trestle bridge was about to be erected; the material for this was on its way from Durban. The telegraph-line had also to be repaired, and to effect this object Corporal Adams, of the Royal Engineers, swam the river, taking with him the wire, which was at least 200 yards long. It was the same corporal who swam across the Little Tugela for a similar purpose. Coke's Brigade had in the meanwhile advanced to the kopjes north of Colenso, our artillery supporting them, and dropping lyddite shells to search the hills to the north, including Grobelar's Kloof. The 2nd Somerset Light Infantry, despite the caution exercised in the general advance,

got into a very warm corner in the afternoon ; advancing to clear some kopjes on the right front for our artillery, they came within range of Boers entrenched on Grobelar's Kloof. Suddenly they were subjected to a heavy long-range Creusot and Mauser fire within 200 yards. The battalion had to endure this for nearly five hours, and sustained serious casualties. Three officers were killed—Captain S. L. V. Crealock and Lieutenants V. F. A. Keith-Falconer and J. C. Parr; the wounded included Captain C. G. Elger and Captain R. E. Holt, R.A.M.C., the medical officer attached to the regiment, the latter being mortally wounded ; he died during the night, notwithstanding all available medical skill.* The casualty list among the Somerset men was lengthy, and some of the other regiments engaged also suffered. The Rifle Brigade had Lieutenant W. R. Wingfield Digby and eleven men wounded ; the Dorsets, Lieutenant F. Middleton wounded ; Colonel Reeves, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and Captain H. G. C. Phillips, of General Coke's Staff, were also wounded. Although it was the first time the Somersets had been under fire in the campaign, the men behaved splendidly, and held their position until dark, when they got orders to retire. The enemy fired volleys upon the vacated positions during the night. During the fighting many cases of individual gallantry occurred : Colour-Sergeant French took command of his company when both his company officers were struck down ; Private Hutchins was conspicuous in distributing ammunition to the firing line and carrying up reserve ammunition under a very heavy fire. Both were awarded the

* The Royal Army Medical Corps had five officers killed, and lost a similar number from disease, during the Natal campaign.

distinguished service medal for their behaviour on this occasion.*

To understand the reason of this attack by the enemy, and to avoid considering it a mere rear-guard action, our present position must be remembered. Our main army had left the high ground which they had spent seven days in fighting for. We had now crossed the river and entered that tunnelled defile which I have already attempted to describe, and our artillery was beginning to be withdrawn from the commanding hills from which it could enfilade the enemy's trenches on the west of the river. The Boers, seeing all this, and noting that they could turn our advance into a *frontal* attack if they returned, having had a rest, and finding they were not pursued, promptly came back—at first only to the number of some 5,000, but, as time will show, in greater force during the next few days. The Rifle Reserve Battalion bivouacked near Fort Wylie that night; it rained considerably, and we had little cover and no blankets. Towards midnight, while in a sound sleep, I was hurriedly awakened by an orderly with a message for all the available medical officers attached to regiments to turn out. Being already fully dressed, even to my boots, I was able to follow him to the next regiment, which was the Royal Lancaster, and was here joined by Captain Tyacke, R.A.M.C. The order stated that as medical arrangements had broken down, and as there were numbers of wounded lying out on the hills, all medical officers to whom the order was presented were to turn out and follow the bearer. Our guide told us he was bringing us to the

* Lieutenants C. B. Prowse, C. H. Little, Sergeants Hewlett and Oakes, and Privates Culland and Marsh, were also mentioned for gallantry.

Somersets, and eventually, after several hours' exposure to rain and cold, staggering over rocks and bushes, colliding with trees, falling into dongas, and last, but not least, being sniped by the enemy and challenged by our outposts, we arrived at the ground, and found our errand a fruitless one, as all the wounded *had been attended to*, and *promptly* too, by the medical officers of their own brigade. We went on, however, to the Eleventh Brigade bivouacs, and there found that Major Winter's bearer company had already pitched its tents in the dark, and had organized a field hospital, as no other had as yet crossed the Tugela. Here the wounded, having been duly treated, were all in bed.*

By daybreak on February 22, the ninth consecutive day of the fighting, practically the whole force and its transport, with the exception of some of the heavy guns, three field batteries, and Barton's Brigade, had crossed to the west side of the Tugela over the pontoon. The positions taken up by our artillery were as follows: The 19th and 63rd Batteries Royal Field Artillery were at the sharp angle of the river near Onderbrook Spruit bridge, on the south side of the river; the 73rd, 28th, 78th, and 7th Batteries Royal Field Artillery took up a position among the kopjes north of Fort Wylie; the Howitzer Battery was exactly under Fort Wylie. Across the river two 4·7 and

* This incident is of interest in view of the recent suggestions of amalgamation of a field hospital and a bearer company in war. Under present conditions each, being a separate unit, can act independently. A bearer company can always act temporarily as a very mobile field hospital, and when not required to move wounded in action, it can camp alongside its field hospital and share its duties. Under an amalgamation mobility would suffer, as, owing to a division of instruments, drugs, surgical dressings, and cooking utensils, much delay would ensue.

four naval 12-pounders, with the 64th Battery Royal Field Artillery, were in position on Hlangwane Hill or its slopes. Extra reinforcements came up to join the main army in the shape of the Irish Brigade under General Hart, and the First Cavalry Brigade with 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery.

The morning was passed by the entire army under rifle and shell fire, which mainly came from the direction of Grobelar's Kloof. After breakfast the Rifle Reserve Battalion moved forward from the hill on which we had bivouacked the night before, up the valley, parallel to the railway and the river. From a high kopje, which we now occupied, I had a good view of the Boer front, and could from my position actually see, aided by my glasses, the enemy working a 15-pounder Creusot gun. It was in the open, near the far end of the road which ran up the valley, being placed behind a stone wall, which had two openings for the muzzle. Before firing the gunners ran it forward by hand, and after each discharge they ran it back in a similar manner. The gun was worked by only three men, and I could see neither gun team nor waggon in the vicinity. Its flash was very small, and it evidently fired smokeless powder, as no vapour was perceptible, but it threw up an appreciable quantity of dust in its recoil. The position of this gun was reported to our artillery, who promptly dropped a few shells near it, and we had the satisfaction of seeing it hurried back over the hill crest, where it disappeared. Some Boers at the end of the valley next attracted our attention. They were toiling hard with pick and shovel, digging, and throwing up clouds of red dust; indeed, they were making trenches as if their lives depended on their exertions. One party, a large one, working

on the side of a steep green hill to our right front, attracted most of our notice. The trench, a long one, ran up along the side of the hill; halfway up the trench some of them had hung their coats on a tall mimosa-bush. Another message was sent to the battery below, and a few more shells were dropped in the vicinity of the burghers, who disappeared like rabbits. Towards mid-day firing became very rapid on both sides, and shells kept crossing over the summit of the kopje on which we sat. The enemy concentrated their fire mainly on the pontoon over which the transport was crossing, and near which a number of 'Tommies' were bathing in the river, and, although they made good practice, little harm was done. It was an amusing sight! First to hear a shell whistling high over our heads, and, after a preliminary duck in case it was going to burst, to hear it pass in the direction of these bathers, and then to turn round and watch them, immediately they heard it coming, dive deep under water like a flock of dabchicks, till it exploded with a roar either in the water, throwing up a geyser of foam, or on the banks, where a volume of black mud was scattered all around. The field hospital where Major Moir, R.A.M.C., and Major Winter's bearer company had pitched tents near the pontoon got its share of shells also. Our artillery all round kept searching the enemy's position on the kopjes facing us, and at intervals the large 6-inch gun at Chieveley sent its huge shells screaming high in the air over our heads, reaching almost, it seemed to us, into Ladysmith. As they hurtled along, one could hear the 'Tommies' exclaim: 'Good luck to you, chum, and a good big bag!' and I must say we all inwardly re-echoed the wish. After our mid-day meal, the Rifle

Reserve Battalion got orders to advance with its brigade on a ridge that has variously been described as Wynne's Hill or Green Hill; the former title I think the more appropriate, as it was on this hill that that gallant and courteous officer, General A. S. Wynne, whom we all loved so much, was wounded on this day during the attack. Major-General Wynne had been appointed to command the Eleventh Brigade since Major-General Woodgate's fatal day on Spion Kop; he had previously to this acted as General Buller's Chief of Staff. The kopjes which I have mentioned had during the morning been prepared by our artillery for an infantry attack. The 61st Howitzer Battery of six guns had been firing lyddite, covering the whole of the kopjes in such a way that for the enemy to remain was to court death. The South Lancashires and the Royal Lancasters led; behind them came the 3rd King's Royal Rifles, the Rifle Brigade, and the Rifle Reserve Battalion; Hildyard's Brigade acted as supports.

The men moved out in companies in wide skirmishing order, drawing the enemy's fire, which increased as we proceeded, causing several casualties. One of the first hit was a sergeant, whom I had to attend; he was struck by a bullet through the knee. The journey was a hard one, and was made more difficult by the uneven nature of the ground over which we had to advance. Owing to this, and to the terrific nature of the rifle-fire, the regimental mules, carrying reserve ammunition, had to be left under cover. I had also to give orders for the mules carrying my surgical and medical panniers to remain behind temporarily with my horse, while I took personally, and with my orderlies, a limited supply of surgical dressings. It was a most exciting experience, advancing on foot in

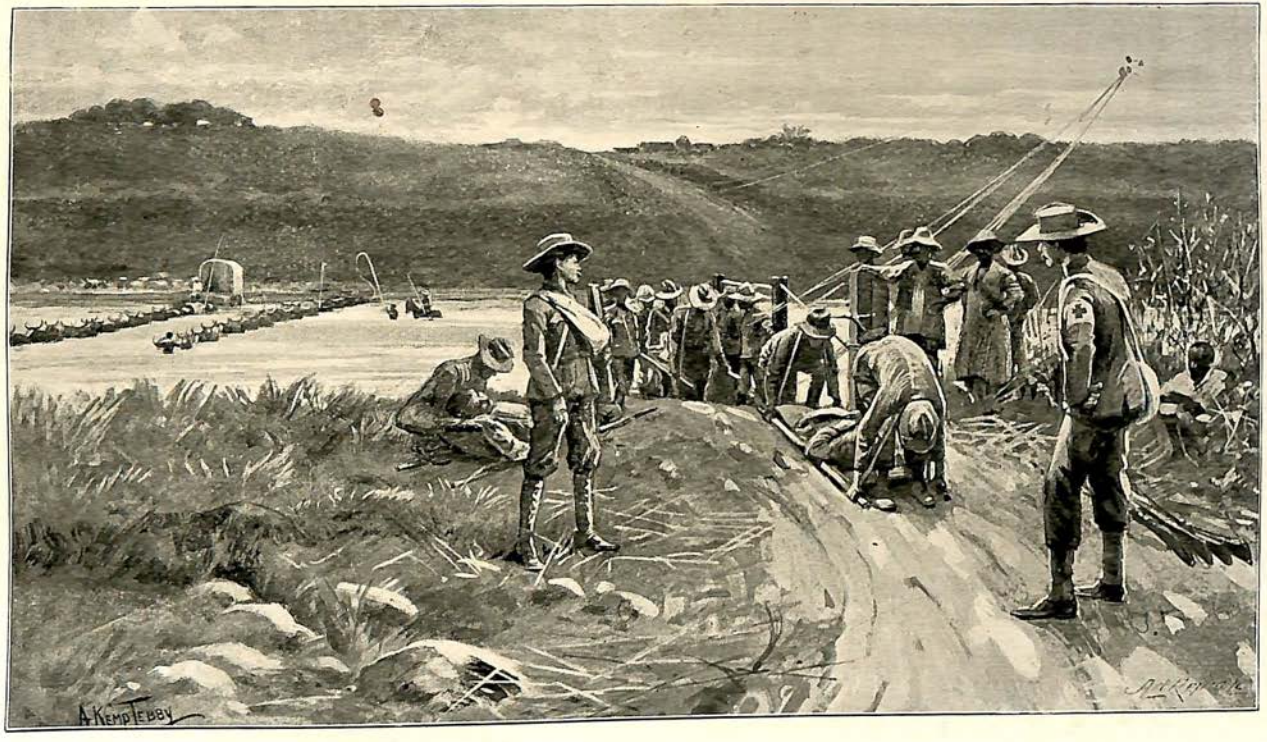
the midst of the infantry, and as it was in the least protected places that the majority of the casualties occurred, I had a hot time, having to make a temporary delay to put on a bandage now and then, and then follow on as quickly as I could run, after seeing the case had been sent to the rear. The fighting was the most spirited which had taken place since the week began. The infantry marched on unconcernedly in the midst of the enemy's fire, some of them even seeking for unexploded shells as trophies. Three heavy guns, at least, were firing on us from Grobelar's Kloof, which dominated our left. A deadly Mauser hail of bullets was coming from the same place—from Wynne's Hill in our direct front, and from Hedge Hill and Hart's Hill on our right front. Our principal objectives were Wynne's Hill and Hedge Hill, the latter a long hog-backed hill running north and south, with an inclination west, and completely commanding the valley of the Langerwachte Spruit. Towards two o'clock General Wynne was hit with a bullet in the thigh; he passed me on a stretcher, and after a momentary pause, finding he had been cared for, I doubled up after my battalion, who had taken up a position among the kopjes. Wounded men now began to pour in, to whom I attended irrespective of regiment, as is the rule in action. All the available stretchers were soon used up, and, acting on my Commanding Officer's advice, I selected a place of greater safety, and removed to it the surplus cases.

After a somewhat hurried examination of the ground, I decided on moving these under cover of the railway embankment alongside the Onderbrook Spruit, on the right of my battalion, and here I remained for some time. Towards evening my supply of bandages and

dressings began to show signs of running short; I therefore sent one of my orderlies back to fetch the panniers which contained the reserve supply, telling him to bring the mules up along the eastern side of the railway embankment, which afforded a little cover. I also told him to bring up my Red Cross flag, which I had left behind. After a short delay he returned with a small party carrying the panniers, for owing to the severity of the fire from the mountain-tops no mules could be safely brought along. As the sharpness of the fire increased, and as several of the Natal stretcher-bearers had been wounded in my dressing-station, I left it and looked out for a better shelter, for I had received a message from my Commanding Officer that the regiment would occupy their present position for the night. Close by was the Onderbrook Spruit; but although affording excellent cover, it was not suitable for a dressing-station, as entrance and exit were too difficult for stretcher cases, from the precipitous nature of its banks. The railway-bridge over this spruit also afforded excellent cover underneath, but the former difficulties prevailed for stretcher cases. About 100 yards further ahead was a small culvert, and I noted that with a little manual labour it could be converted into an admirable dressing-station. I accordingly got a number of Natal stretcher-bearers to accompany me, and with a few borrowed shovels and picks constructed a fairly smooth path from the railway embankment down to the culvert, and removed the barbed-wire fences on both sides of the line. Although all the time under a brisk rifle-fire, the men set to their task cheerfully and energetically. Never can I look back on these men, who went by the name of 'body-snatchers,' without

thinking how much we all owe to them. When all was completed, I removed my materials to the culvert, and having hoisted the flag, I sent word to my Commanding Officer as to my exact position, so that he could let his company officers know where to direct their wounded. He sent back word approving of my change of site.

The position of a medical officer during an engagement is of the utmost moment. It is a grave and responsible post, and its choice must rest entirely with the medical officer himself, as the Commanding Officer of a fighting unit is necessarily otherwise fully engaged. To facilitate the choice, a medical officer should be, in all cases, previously informed of the general plan and scope of the proposed fight. Knowing this, he would be enabled to select a position from which he could exercise his skill in the best and safest way, not only for himself, but for his patients. That a medical officer should be up in the firing line, moving from company to company, is impossible. If he is brought there, he gets cuts off with some individual company, and from his isolation, so to speak, can render little assistance to other companies. I do not desire to criticise; but I think it my duty to say, in view of future events, that it was inattention to this circumstance that lost us several of our medical officers during the campaign. The national and glorious traditions of the British Army have been, and always will be, such that no officer or man, be he combatant or otherwise, will, if opportunity presents, hesitate for a moment to help a wounded fellow-creature. This is not individual bravery: it is the national spirit. But a Commanding Officer who places his regimental medical officer in a position where the life of, perhaps,



BRINGING WOUNDED ACROSS THE TUGELA AT COLENSO.

From the *Graphic*, by E. BLAKE KNOX.

the only skilled factor of surgical treatment is in jeopardy is not acting in a way, to say the least of it, most beneficial to those who may happen to be wounded in the regiment with whose care he is entrusted. I do not say, for one instant, that this has been done except thoughtlessly; but it has been done, and many valuable lives have been sacrificed as a consequence.

But to return to the fight. As I have already mentioned, the Onderbrook Spruit railway-bridge was about 100 yards from my dressing-station. From that station all the stretcher-bearers, after their burdens had been dressed, had to pass over the bridge in returning to Major Moir's and other field hospitals near the pontoon. On the red ironwork of this bridge, which was clearly visible from where I stood, the enemy for some reason had concentrated their fire. What their object was I cannot say; but perhaps it was because they saw several small bodies of troops coming over to reinforce our men who were on the kopjes at the other side. The Boer trenches on the hills were within less than 2,000 yards; the Mauser rifle is sighted to this range, but will kill at another 1,000. Many casualties occurred on this bridge, not alone among the troops coming up, but also among the stretcher-bearers, and even the wounded. It was a regular death-trap, but not a man flinched. I saw a regiment coming up along the line; I cannot recall its name, but as well as I remember it was the ill-fated Inniskillings. They came along in single file to make way for the line of stretchers passing on to the hospitals, not heeding any suggestions of the bearers as to danger. On they came, some smoking their pipes, some passing jocular remarks to the

wounded to 'Buck up, chum, or you will soon be dead!' all cheery. Suddenly a crackle of musketry; the enemy had seen them, and several fresh cases were brought in for treatment. More than sixty men have been recorded as having been shot on this bridge. As the tail of this regiment passed over the enemy turned a pom-pom on the bridge, and the marks produced by the shells on the ironwork remain unto this day.

Later on a big, burly, khaki-clad man with a brassard on his arm caught my eye, coming towards the bridge. I gave him a warning shout; he heeded it not, and still sauntered on under rifle and pom-pom fire. When he came up I recognised this intrepid person as Father Reginald Collins, one of our Army Chaplains; he had come to look after his flock and to give the doctors a hand. Not long after another solitary visitor came up along the line, walking briskly, a tall, stalwart figure with his helmet drawn down somewhat over his eyes. He stopped a stretcher-party, and evidently, from something they said to him, looked up at the hill-tops. As he crossed the bridge the pom-pom spoke again; it had the range to a nicety. The figure stopped and shook his fist at the heights, and came on unscathed. Yet, as if to mock him, the small shells flew all round him, and on his arrival at my dressing-station I saw it was Colonel Allin, the Principal Medical Officer of the Field Army. Having inspected my supply of dressings, he put some in his pocket, and hurried on to see that all his other officers had what they needed. From this time onwards a continuous stream of cases kept pouring in, and I got most valuable assistance from the volunteer stretcher-bearers, whose self-sacrifice and devotion to the wounded will

for ever remain in the minds of all who came into contact with them. Captain Tyacke, R.A.M.C., of the Royal Lancaster Regiment, which was close by, joined hands with me, and worked with indefatigable skill to lighten what was becoming an enormous strain.

I will now return to describe what was going on in the fighting line. The Eleventh Brigade had advanced and taken Wynne's Hill after considerable opposition. This brigade and Lyttelton's Second Division now pressed on towards Hedge Hill, which was partly taken; but our men were eventually driven off by severe enfilade and reverse fire; they managed, however, to retain part of the south end, which, though not giving us the hill itself, denied it to the enemy. Some of the Field Artillery, in moving up closer to support the infantry, came under a heavy fire. One shell, bursting among the team of one of the guns of the 7th Battery Royal Field Artillery, killed almost all the horses. Driver M. Harding, R.F.A., with admirable coolness and gallantry, extricated the wheel horses, single-handed, and drove his gun into action with one pair only (for this action he was mentioned in General Buller's despatches). At dusk the enemy made a fierce and furious counter-attack all along our lines. Above the roar of artillery, in which our howitzers joined by firing salvos of lyddite, the crackle of musketry was deafening; lyddite shells bursting on the Boer trenches lit up the whole horizon like lightning. This fusillade continued for several hours. In the darkness the enemy tried to rush the outposts of the 3rd King's Royal Rifles, who were on our left. Nothing daunted, the small party got into them with the bayonet, and retook the ridge, running forward a little too far, perhaps, in doing so,

and getting cut off from their supports. Here they remained for some time under a heavy fire, without food or water, waiting for help; but none coming, they were ordered to retire. Again a heavy enfilade fire. The East Surreys came to their assistance, and they in turn got cut off, and had to be extricated by the Devons. The Royal Lancasters, who occupied a forward position under Grobelar's Kloof, were twice attacked during the night. The Boers here again came resolutely to close quarters, discharging their rifles at the Lancasters, who rushed on with fixed bayonets, driving the enemy back, and firing volleys after them as they retreated. The enemy returned some hours afterwards, when the same scene was enacted. The Rifle Reserve Battalion also had a bayonet charge, and sixteen men of the regiment showed blood on their weapons afterwards. The night passed in my dressing-station was full of exciting incidents. During the counter-attack at dusk a heavy rifle-fire opened on it from both sides of the river; the origin of this was a small candle, which had been lit to examine cases. All that went back had to be examined by us on the way, and as this could not be done without a light, things began to look serious. Dark lanterns are not supplied by the Government as part of a regimental medical officer's equipment. So a substitute had to be discovered. The plan I adopted was to put a candle, stuck rigid by its own grease, inside a helmet; this, with a piece of brown paper pinned across in which was a small aperture, made an excellent lantern, and cases could be inspected by its dim light in a sheltered place. The mere striking of a match by one of the stretcher-bearers was followed by an immediate volley. Sniping was kept up all

night, some of the bullets that hit the railway-bridge and adjacent rocks going off with a bang and a flash of light. Whether these bullets were really explosive ones I cannot positively say, but it is probable that they were. Many bullets that hit the rocks near did not behave in the same way. Varied were the sounds the missiles made, some whistling, others humming, some ending their course in a dull thud, others, probably ricocheting ones, passing by, purring or screaming. The rifle reports also varied, the individual Mauser discharge, with its double report, 'pit! pot!' contrasting markedly with the more solid and duller 'bang!' of the Martini rifle; the pom-pom, with its hyena-like laugh of five notes; the Maxim, with its deadly spitting fire—its report can be well simulated by rapidly drumming one finger on a table; and, last but not least, the fire of our Lee-Metfords, which can be imitated by similarly drumming all fingers at once.

Other noises met our ears, now strained to their highest pitch—the monotonous croaking of the frogs in the Tugela, the chirruping of the crickets, an everlasting din; a battery of artillery thundering along the railway-line in the dark: goodness knows where they came from or what they were trying to do.* They seem to gallop as they pass the bridge over our heads, sending down showers of clay and loose stones, the drivers shouting, whips cracking, lots of choice language; they pass as quickly as they come. Such are the sounds of war on this night, and, notwithstanding, still comes that continuous stream of stretchers, those khaki-clad, blood-stained bundles—

* It appears that this was the 28th Battery Royal Field Artillery on its way out of a cul-de-sac, in which it had been caught the day before.

poor fellows who, though suffering, weary, hungry and thirsty, never grumble, and are all patient and ready to wait their turn with 'the doctor.'

It seemed to us that we two doctors would not be able to cope with the amount of work. The strain was very great, owing to the scattered position of the regiments among whom the casualties occurred, so that in many instances their own officers were, in fact, cut off and isolated from their out-lying companies. Owing to the accumulation of cases, many of the stretchers had to be laid on the ground on a level place to wait their turn to be brought in under the arch, where they were examined and passed out from the other side. A couple of the stretcher-bearers were specially appointed to regulate the traffic, and to see that no blockage or congestion occurred at either the entrance or the exit of our station. Our medical orderlies gave us the greatest possible assistance; from their previous training they were quite adept at bandaging, and many of the stretcher-bearers were commandeered for the same work and for other duties. The river was only some 20 yards distant, and supplied water which, though not very pure, was refreshing for the patients, both internally and externally.

Many of the wounds were of a ghastly and terrible character, numbers of them being caused by expanding bullets. Not a few of the officers and men who passed through, some wounded, others dying, others dead, were almost unrecognisable, although many of them we had known personally in the course of the campaign. I saw sundry old friends. Major E. W. Yeatherd, of the Royal Lancasters, was carried in semi-conscious, shot through the head; he was as

kind and as gallant an officer as I ever had the honour to meet. I had come out with him and his regiment on the same transport, the *Dilwara*, and had been in close connection with his regiment during the campaign.

The total casualties among officers and men for the day were calculated to be about 300. Information from Boer sources state that the Middelburg and Ermelo commandos bore the brunt of the day's fighting. Mr. Schalk Burger was also said to have left Pretoria for Ladysmith, and a long Boer ambulance to have started for the same place. The Boers lost heavily, leaving many dead on the ground, amongst whom was a grandson of Mr. Kruger.

Towards dawn of the 23rd active hostilities recommenced; at first it was only a steady splutter of musketry, but as light came on the guns joined in. An officer of the East Surrey led a bayonet charge to force back some Boers who had crept up close to our outpost during the night. In this charge he himself was wounded, and before he could be carried off the field was hit again and again, receiving ten separate wounds in all. He was carried into my dressing-station, being accompanied by Lieutenant Morton, R.A.M.C., who was the East Surrey medical officer. Between us we dressed his wounds, some of which were of a very serious nature; his right arm had been broken in several places by expanding bullets. Many more wounds caused by these came in. About the same time an officer of the Rifle Reserve Battalion was shot through the palm of the hand by an expanding bullet; the aperture of entrance was as small as a pea, but the exit on the back of the hand was larger than a five-shilling piece, with fracture of the bones of

three fingers and copious hæmorrhage, which took me some time to control. He was also shot through the knee with an ordinary Mauser bullet.

One of the first things I had to do when there was sufficient light was to inspect what available medical and surgical materials I had left at my disposal after the night's work. Having done this, I sent back an orderly with a note to Colonel Allin, P.M.O., summarizing my position and materials, and requesting the despatch of further supplies; I also requisitioned for a couple of dark lanterns, some cooking utensils, and a further supply of stimulants and 'comforts' for the wounded. These were all promptly sent, and later on Colonel Allin himself came to inspect my post. During a temporary decrease in the stream of wounded I managed to find time to run down to the river's edge just below the celebrated Tugela Falls, and there get a cooling and refreshing wash; but even this was denied me in comfort, as a few snipers on the hills opened fire on me. As neither Captain Tyacke nor myself had had any food or sleep during the night, we were pretty well 'done up.' A welcome surprise came to us, however, about ten o'clock, when Lieutenant M. White, one of the officers of my regiment, brought me some 'bully' and biscuit from the regimental supply, thoughtfully sent by my Commanding Officer; this food, with a slab of chocolate dissolved in dirty Tugela water, I divided with Captain Tyacke, who had had the misfortune not to receive his own ration, and we were both much refreshed by the meal.

It is now necessary for me to return to the story of the day's fighting. In the early morning both cavalry brigades got orders to cross the pontoon at Colenso,

Dundonald's Brigade crossed at 8 a.m. under shell-fire, massed under shelter at Fort Wylie, and at once proceeded to protect the left flank from the hundreds of Boer sharpshooters who were in the high hills, and who rapidly advanced whenever they saw a chance of doing damage. Our heavy 5-inch guns also crossed and came into action near this place. One of them had a particularly 'hot time' after crossing. During the morning our artillery thoroughly searched by shell-fire all the enemy's positions near Langerwachte Spruit, as well as all the dongas leading to it, this making us anticipate a further advance of the infantry, who were in much the same positions as on the evening of the 22nd. It seemed that the enemy had been reinforced during the night, not only in men but in guns. The main road, west of the line which ran up the river valley, seemed to be one of their favourite targets; the Boer gunners had its range to a nicety, and made most accurate shooting from the hills. At one part of this road in particular, where it crossed a small hill, I noticed that every passer-by had to run the gauntlet. I saw a battery of artillery passing this place; each gun and waggon put on a sprint as it came to the marked spot, and fortune favoured them, with the exception of the last waggon; all but this got by, either passing too soon or too late for the arrival of the shell evidently meant for each; there was a distinct pause between each attempt to pass. The last waggon, as it reached the summit of the incline, paused; probably a horse stumbled. Swish! bang! a Creusot shell is planted into the middle of the team; it explodes with a flash and a cloud of white smoke, mixed with red dust from the road; when this has cleared away, three horses are seen down with their

riders; one driver gets up, the other lies motionless—he is dead. A rush and a commotion is visible, as, with wonderful promptitude, the survivor, joined by some others, stands to his horses; the dead ones are pulled aside, the living whipped up, and, with a cheer, the waggon is on its way again, under the fire of a couple more shells, which do no damage. The next to cross this spot is a regimental ammunition cart, a Kaffir, accompanying it, sitting on the top yelling, screeching, and whipping up his mules. Suddenly he turns a summersault off his perch; some infantry, who are marching alongside the cart and acting as escort, get the mules by their bridles and hurry on the team; one of them picks up the Kaffir, and, seeing the Red Cross flag, takes him down to me. His face is covered with blood, it is already clotting in his hair, his eyes are bathed in it, yet all the while he is grinning, laughing, and chattering, abusing Dutchmen, and wiping off the blood with his hand. A small dark punctured aperture is barely visible above his ear; but when the blood is cleared away a lump is apparent, and something can be rocked about in it between the finger and thumb. A nick with a lancet exposes an object glistening in the lump; a little pressure gently applied, and out shells a Mauser bullet. I hand him this trophy, for they all want such curios; he looks at it and turns it over in his hand, and then puts it in his mouth for want of a better pocket. An antiseptic compress of cyanide gauze is put on the wounds, and a tight bandage round the head; then, before I have time to stop him, he is off and away, in the direction of his waggon, singing as if nothing had happened him, to show his trophy round. He is a lucky man to have a thick head, for one-sixteenth of an inch more

of angular impact and that bullet would have entered his brain. My next two cases were both officers of the Rifle Reserve Battalion, Lieutenant H. W. Dumaresq, 1st R.B., and Lieutenant G. C. Kelly, 2nd K.R.R. Both these officers were severely hit while assisting wounded in the firing line, the former in the arm and the latter in the thigh. Another arrival, amongst a fresh batch of wounded which came in, was a sergeant of the same regiment; he had been struck by a bullet in the side of his head, which had passed right through, blinding both eyes and opening the nasal passages on the way. I forget his name, but his pitiable regret at having to leave his comrades in the firing line, and his appeal that his ammunition should be sent back to them, remain in my memory.

Owing to the arrival of Lieutenant Morton, R.A.M.C., who joined our dressing-station, Captain Tyacke and myself were able to take things somewhat easier during the morning, and got a short rest in turns. The fight was still, however, progressing, and Mr. Winston Churchill, in 'London to Ladysmith,' correctly summarizes the condition of affairs about mid-day as follows:

'Mr. Churchill found General Buller and his Staff in a somewhat exposed position, whence an excellent view could be obtained. The General displayed his customary composure, and told him (Mr. Churchill) that he had just ordered General Hart's Brigade, supported by two battalions from Lyttelton's Division, to assault Hart's Hill. "I have told Hart to follow the railway; I think he can get round their left flank under cover of the river-bank," he said; "but we must be prepared for a counter-attack on our left as soon as they see what I'm up to." General Buller then made

certain dispositions of his cavalry, which brought the South African Light Horse close to the wooded kopje on which they stood. Sir Redvers Buller's plan was as follows: On the 22nd he had taken the low kopjes, and his powerful artillery gave him complete command of the river gorge behind the kopjes, which acted as a kind of shield; he proposed to advance his infantry until the angle of the river was passed and there was room to stretch out his, till then, cramped right arm and reach round the enemy's left on Hart's Hill, and so crumple it. This perilous and difficult task was entrusted to the Irish Brigade, which comprised the Dublin Fusiliers, the Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Connaught Rangers, and the Imperial Light Infantry, who had temporarily replaced the Border Regiment—in all about 3,000 men, supported by 2,000 more. Their Commander, General Hart, was one of the bravest officers in the army, and it was generally felt that such a leader and such troops could carry the business through if success lay within the scope of efforts.'

The story of the storming of Hart's Hill by the Irish Brigade may be told at some length, for was it not this incident, following as it did the noble work done by the same men at the battle of Colenso on December 15 of the previous year, and again at Taba Myama on January 20 of the present one—followed, as it was fated to be yet again by another event on the 27th—that moved our late lamented Sovereign with tears to exclaim: 'Oh, my poor Irish!' and afterwards, as a sign of her Royal approval and appreciation of their services, to visit their country, and to embody the Irish Guards as a commemoration?

At 12.30 General Hart ordered his brigade to

advance from where they had been resting for a short while near Colenso, to the railway-line. They passed along this bullet-swept path over the Onderbrook Spruit bridge, the Inniskillings leading, and the other regiments following. Every man of the brigade had therefore to run the gauntlet of the Boer marksmen, and numbers dropped on the bridge, where the enemy's bullets were falling thick. Some fifty men were put out of action* in the race over the bridge to the rendezvous further on, notwithstanding that some of the Royal Engineers had already begun to put sand-bags on the sides of the ironwork as a protection from the rifle-fire. It was while fixing these sand-bags that Sergeant-Major J. H. Smith and Sapper Trash, R.E., displayed such conspicuous gallantry that their services were mentioned by General Buller in his despatches relating to this day. Until the bridge was sand-bagged only one man was allowed to cross at a time. Further on the Langerwachte Spruit had to be crossed under similar difficulties, and the three leading battalions congregated under cover of the eastern spurs of Hart's Hill, where they rested for some time.

In the meanwhile General Lyttelton in person moved up the Durham Light Infantry and the 2nd Rifle Brigade to the advance line of kopjes beyond Onderbrook Spruit. The artillery continued their work until dark, 'when they 'ceased fire,' as the light did not then permit them to distinguish friend from foe. The

* An act of gallantry was displayed at this spot as the Inniskillings crossed. Private Nesbitt fell badly wounded on the middle of the bridge. With considerable courage Private Thompson of the same regiment ran back and removed his comrade, though under a heavy fire, to a place of safety.

infantry attack did not commence until 5.30. Hart's Hill rises from the Tugela about a mile above the Onderbrook Spruit bridge. It is perhaps best described as triangular in form, with one angle running to the river. From the latter it rises abruptly by a series of rugged boulder-strewn, very steep steps to a false crest line about 300 feet or so above the Tugela. On the summit of this line there appeared a small elongated mound, in reality belonging to the true crest line, which is 400 yards away. Between the latter (on which lay the highest Boer trenches) and the false crest there was a glacis-like slope over which troops would have to pass absolutely unsheltered to reach the true crest, which rose from the far end abruptly. At the north-western end of the hill there was a thick thorn kloof; near this a portion of the enemy under Commandant Dupreez was located, while a little further to the rear was another kloof, in which the enemy's Creusots were under cover. Such was the position the Irish Brigade were expected to storm against the finest defensive marksmen in the world.

Inniskillings leading, headed by their gallant Colonel, and Connaughts and the other regiments supporting, the first (or what I have termed the false) crest was reached. Up to this the advance had been somewhat covered, but the moment the enemy sighted the Irish climbing the hill they opened a heavy fusillade, to which the attacking party replied. Up, up they rushed, making the best of what cover they had, until the first crest was reached. The ground available here was so narrow that, though only four companies of the Inniskillings were in the firing line, there was scarcely room for half that number to deploy. The stern part of the attack only now began. Here the glacis-like

slope faced them, over which they had to pass to reach the goal. With rifles at the 'ready,' and cool as ever, the Inniskillings cleared the crest. A long Boer trench confronted them, and as they passed on their way to rush it some of them came to grief over some wire fencing, and Boer bullets found their victims. There was not, however, the slightest wavering, and as we watched them with straining eyes through our glasses against the dim sky-line, for light was now fading, we could see the gallant Inniskillings pass swiftly forward with a dash and enthusiasm almost cruel to watch, for at the moment a roar of musketry loud as a thunder-clap echoed on our ears, the whole Boer position blazed into one continuous stream of fire, and the figures of the front line of that gallant regiment fell like corn in front of a mowing-machine. They had been exposed to what was, perhaps, the heaviest frontal and enfilade rifle-fire from each flank that had fallen to the lot of British troops in the campaign.* Never faltering at the sight of the fate of the first line, the second rushed headlong on. A cheer that reached the ears of the army below noted the fact that the first trench had been reached and carried at point of the bayonet. A few of the survivors, who had been in this trench before the charge, and had been coolly standing up between the bursting of our lyddite shells and firing down on the advancing troops, had fled. They saw that nothing could stop it, and, as the bayonets seemed already within striking distance, they jumped up, standing irresolute for the moment, and finally bolted up the hill for dear life, to join their

* The Boers could be seen standing up, and from the extraordinary rapidity of the fire they must have had loaders with spare rifles to hand up from the trenches.

comrades on the top. With another cheer the Inniskillings followed these fleeing men, with a recklessness that cost them dear, and attempted to rush the top of the hill. They met with a momentary success, as the enemy could not fire until their brethren were out of the way; and then there came another swish of Mauser bullets, and another line of our officers and men went down, and what was left of that gallant band, which had done all that human courage and endurance could do, lay on that bullet-swept glacis, and emptied their magazines as best they could at the dark slouch hats momentarily exposed on the battlements above.

In that gallant charge the 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers lost some 200 men, while of the officers engaged their Colonel (Lieutenant-Colonel Thackeray), Major F. A. Sanders, Lieutenant W. O. Stuart, were killed, and Major C. J. L. Davidson, Captain R. M. Foot, and Lieutenants J. Evans, J. M. Crawford, C. Ridings, H. P. Pott, J. G. Devenish and G. D. V. Steward, were wounded, and Lieutenant T. A. D. Best was missing.*

Some companies from the Connaught Rangers and 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, headed by Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. H. Sitwell, D.S.O., of the latter regiment, advanced to renew the attack; but it was futile, as darkness had now come on. This attacking party likewise fared badly. Colonel Sitwell was killed, and the Dublins also had Lieutenants A. F. Hill, A. Brodhurst-Hill, F. B. Lane, and J. T. Dennie wounded, and Captain S. C. Maitland (2nd Gordons, attached) killed. The men lost 8 killed, 62 wounded.*

The Connaught Rangers had Lieutenants J. L. T.

* Some of these casualties occurred on the 24th.

Conroy, R. W. Harding, H. Moore-Hutchinson, A. Wise, A. J. Lambert, and Captain E. M. Woulfe Flanagan (5th Battalion, attached), wounded. The loss among the men was 19 killed, 106 wounded.*

The Imperial Light Infantry had Major Hay wounded, and among the men 19 were killed, 105 wounded, and 8 missing.*

It had been General Buller's intention (see Natal Despatch No. 3, paragraphs 29, 30) that this attack on Hart's Hill should have been made by the whole five battalions, but General Hart advanced when only two battalions were up, thinking his supports would soon follow. General Hart's actual attack was made by the Inniskillings and Connaughts, supported by only half the battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers, and though the assault was delivered with the utmost gallantry, the men failed to reach the 'true crest' of the hill. The regiments, as I have already mentioned, suffered severely, but their loss was not fruitless. Their gallantry gained for us a lodgment on the hill, which insured our ultimate success on the succeeding days.

During the night heavy sniping was continuous all along our line. The enemy made a heavy attack on our left, and a good deal of hand-to-hand fighting took place, prisoners being taken and retaken, and several bayonet charges delivered. The Rifle Reserve Battalion on one occasion withheld their fire, and waited in their sangars till the enemy were within 20 yards; then, charging them with their bayonets, repulsed the assailants. The enemy also attacked the position taken by General Hart, and were driven back. Some time near midnight General Hart visited

* Some of these casualties occurred on the 24th.

my dressing-station, and asked for stretcher-parties to be sent out to his hill, saying there were a number of wounded lying out unattended to. Although extremely busy with the numerous cases coming in to the dressing-station, I called for volunteers, and set out at once, carrying one dark lantern and about a dozen stretcher-squads, manned by the Natal Volunteer Bearers and some of the regulars. We ascended the hill where the Irish Brigade had lost so heavily, and succeeded in carrying back in the dark a good many of the more severe cases, notwithstanding desultory sniping and the necessity of extreme caution with the lantern. All went well until an unfortunate incident occurred. I had to delay over one case which was lying out some distance from the lower crest of the hill. This patient I thought was unconscious, though in reality he was dead. I had handed my dark lantern, with its shutter closed, to one of my party, to enable me to determine by nearer examination whether there was any sign of life in the motionless form, which was still warm. The man holding the lantern, either by accident or thinking to help me, released the shutter, when a broad beam of light flashed out, and this was immediately followed by a volley from the enemy's trenches in our direction. The holder of the lantern was shot dead, and two more stretcher-bearers were wounded. Had not the bullets gone for the most part high, and the lantern been extinguished in its fall, more casualties might have occurred. As it was, we had all to lie close behind what scanty cover we could crawl to for over an hour, and make our way back as quietly as we could, for it was utterly impossible to recover any more wounded, the enemy being thenceforward on the alert. On our way down towards the

NATAL VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE CORPS AT WORK.

MAJOR WINTER, R.A.M.C.

Langerwachte Spruit we heard some groaning, and, proceeding in the direction of the sound, one of the party stumbled over a stretcher on the ground. On that stretcher lay an unconscious man. His head was partially bandaged, and beside the stretcher lay the two bearers. One of these had been shot dead, and the other was lying in a pool of blood groaning. He had been struck by a bullet through the thigh, the bone being badly broken, which rendered him helpless. We removed both cases, and the poor fellow, who was conscious, told me that he and a comrade had been shot down while dressing the unconscious man's head. The handles of the stretcher had been splintered by the volley.

Throughout the day and night of the 23rd a number of cases of conspicuous gallantry took place. The list of these is long, owing to the large number of regiments in the fighting line, and would in all probability have been much longer but for the mortality among those who were in a position to report them. Conspicuous for their attention to the wounded, carrying them under fire from the firing line to a place of safety, were Lieutenant Inkson, R.A.M.C., who received a Victoria Cross, also Lance-Sergeant Knight (2nd West Surrey), Lance-Corporals Stebbing and Robins (2nd Devons), Lance-Corporal Cleland and Private Thompson (1st Inniskilling Fusiliers), Lance-Corporal Hendrick (1st King's Royal Rifles), Private Kenny (1st Connaught Rangers), Privates J. Brown and T. Adams (Rifle Reserve Battalion). The two last-named men I myself had the opportunity of bringing forward, and they were the only two whose names I could remember, as owing to the continuous strain of my own work I had neither time nor means of com-

piling or finding out the names of a multitude of deserving soldiers who rendered aid. These two, however, had made themselves so very conspicuous all through the day and following night that I recognised their faces while holding a medical inspection of the regiment on the following day. They were both afterwards rewarded with the Distinguished Service Medal for their work on this occasion, and right well did they earn this highly coveted decoration. General Buller also mentioned Lance-Corporals Fisher and Parris, of the 2nd East Surrey Regiment—the former for gallantry in working a machine-gun, and the latter for courage in carrying messages under heavy fire; both these men also got the Distinguished Service Medal.

Besides the casualties I have mentioned on pp. 180 and 181 as occurring on this day, I must name Lieutenant C. H. Hinton (2nd East Surrey) killed, and Captain P. V. W. Vigors (2nd Devons) wounded.

By dawn on the 24th the Irish Brigade had thrown up lines of sangars all along their position on Hart's Hill. Daylight also found the enemy prepared; in the night they had dug some fresh trenches closer to the position held by our troops, so close that the opposing firing lines were within 300 yards of each other. On the open space between Briton and Boer lay the wounded, dying, and dead of the previous day's carnage. It was at the first light of day that there occurred an incident of such a barbarous and unhuman nature that I almost hesitate to record it. It has already received considerable publicity, and, though not a spectator of it myself, I have every reason, from careful inquiry at the time and afterwards, to believe it absolutely true.

The Boers, who were much nearer the wounded Inniskillings than were their comrades, came out with a Red Cross flag, and firing thereupon ceased, locally. After picking up their own wounded, they gave some of our men a little water, took away their rifles, and started despoiling dead and wounded, taking off their boots and emptying out their pockets; this so infuriated some of our men that they forthwith fired on the Boers, Red Cross flag notwithstanding.

This, of course, was the signal for fighting to recommence fiercely, and neither side would hear of parley. The Boers behaved brutally, and several wounded men who tried to crawl away were deliberately shot at close quarters with many bullets. Comment on this is, I think, superfluous. Where, in the annals of civilized warfare, has the like ever been found? Picture the feelings of the agonized spectators, when they saw their comrades, their own brothers in arms, as they lay wounded only a few yards away, being pillaged, undressed, and heartlessly deprived of their only protection from a tropical sun. Is there reason to doubt that if any soldiers were in a like position it would be impossible to restrain a similar retaliation? It may be argued that our troops had no right to fire on the Red Cross flag, but where in the Geneva Convention do we find that that flag covers pillage and robbery? Then for the enemy to run back to their trenches, and, looking towards our lines, seeing a wounded man perhaps within a few feet of safety after an arduous crawl on his hands and knees, a task which had taken him hours to accomplish, or seeing another, a motionless, exhausted, semi-conscious form, holding up his hands for water, to wreak their vengeance on such poor creatures—riddle them with bullets—murder them

as they lay! Was it any wonder that, watching this, the rage of the army rose to boiling pitch? Not only did these inhuman outrages occur to the Irish Brigade, but other regiments report them on this day.

A private of the King's Royal Rifles stated that he was taken prisoner about 5 a.m. on the 23rd by the Boers, being too far in front of his company to retire. He was released about 10 a.m. on the 25th. During this time he was kept in the Boer trenches without food or drink. There were a number of our wounded lying close to the trenches, and asking for water all the time, which was always refused. If any of the wounded moved, they were shot at. Most of them died for want of assistance, as they lay there for two days and two nights. The Boers (who seemed to have a fair knowledge of English) said, 'Let them die, and give them no water.'

Help had been promised to the Irish Brigade by this morning, but up to between nine and ten o'clock no aid arrived. Yet they held their own in the firing line, as our infantry can, and about this hour, as if the Boers were determined to wipe them out, a rush was made on them by the enemy from the hill. At first they were forced to give way a little; but they knew their orders, and that their duty was to hold that hill for their Queen and for their General. Firing steadily and with accuracy their Lee-Metfords, they made the morning air ring out with a continual 'swish-swish' of deadly hail; and once again the Boers turned tail, and once again they had to seek the cover of their rocks and sangars. It was only then—about ten o'clock—when this determined rush had been repulsed by those hungry and weary men, that General Hildyard's battalions arrived on the scene. The Irishmen greeted

them with a ringing cheer—not a cheer for the relief, but a cheer from assurance that the hill which they had gained at such sacrifice was to be held at all cost. The Durham Light Infantry replaced the Inniskillings in the firing line, and the latter passed down the hill to obtain the rest that had been denied them in the night —a rest they badly needed and had so splendidly earned. Never, indeed, could Tennyson's words be more suitably applied than to those heroes of the Irish Brigade who fell upon, or survived, the footing they gained and held on Hart's Hill on the 23rd and 24th : 'When shall their glory fade ?'

Yet, be it remembered, many of their fallen comrades, dead, wounded, and dying, still lay out under a scorching sun. Many attempts were made to rescue them ; stretcher-bearers and medical officers who went out were fired upon, and were obliged to leave them unattended the whole day. Even the troops in the firing line tried to help them. The following men were conspicuous for their gallantry in this respect: Privates G. Bennett, J. Cottle, and J. S. Parker, of the Durhams, succeeded in removing several ; Private R. Hunter, of the Imperial Light Infantry, while under a heavy fire, twice built sangars round wounded comrades; Private G. Reed, of the same regiment, while under a heavy fire, carried in a wounded Connaught Ranger to a place of safety, and remained with him after the other men had retired ; Sergeant W. Langrish and Private W. Howe, of the 2nd Scottish Rifles, similarly rescued a wounded man.

I will now return to the more personal part of my narrative. With the coming of morning light, we forwarded those of the stretcher cases which were too serious to have been sent on in the dark. I had to

bury several poor fellows who had been brought down dead to the dressing-station. Some of the stretcher-bearers dug the graves near the railway-arch, where they are to be seen to this day; a short service was read; letters, a few regimental buttons, or a medal-ribbon, taken from the stiff khaki-clad form to send to his relatives; and then the red South African soil was thrown in. Such was a soldier's burial.

Early in the morning of the 24th, Wynne's Eleventh Brigade, who had been for the last two days in the firing line, were relieved by another brigade from their arduous position, to enable them to get food and rest. As they passed back to shelter on the reverse slopes of the kopjes near Onderbrook Spruit, I got orders to rejoin my regiment at that place. This I did without delay, and after a wash and what seemed a rare good breakfast I set to to make out my casualty report for the last two days' action. This was handed in to the Adjutant; and a quartette, comprising the Commanding Officer, Adjutant, Regimental Medical Officer, and Regimental Sergeant-Major, held consultation to prepare the final casualty roll to be sent in to head-quarters. While this was being written, the men, who had by this time finished their breakfast, which to some was their first square meal for days, were scattered in groups round the dirty puddles of the spruit, washing, brushing, and cleaning themselves after two days' absence from water.

During the morning I held a medical inspection of the men. They were all in fine form, notwithstanding their heavy fighting, and the ranks, though somewhat thinned, were none the worse for the exposure they had undergone. Fifty yards below us, on the slope of the hill, a field howitzer battery

had taken up its position. It was the 61st Royal Field Artillery Battery under Major Gordon. All that day I had ample opportunity of watching and studying the manipulation and effects of these weird guns. They were very short, almost stumpy, of a large bore, 5 inches in diameter—a bore, therefore, rather larger than that of the heavy naval guns employed at field work. These howitzers were firing common shell weighing 50 pounds, and containing a bursting charge of lyddite of enormous power. To compensate for its low velocity, the gun is fired at a high angle, so that the shell may fall almost vertically. In this way the howitzer can search out rocks and trenches, its shells bursting with a terrific roar. The shells of this battery, as they left the guns, were clearly perceptible to the naked eye passing over our heads. The noise of discharge was terrific, and very trying to one's nerves when caught unprepared. Usually, however, the officer's warning to his men to fire the gun gave one time to prepare to meet the shock; otherwise, when it came unexpectedly the vibration was decidedly unpleasant.

The enemy were also busy returning the fire, shell after shell passing over our heads and bursting either behind the battery or short of it. One or two which burst among the men did heavy damage; eight of the infantry were killed or wounded by one shrapnel, seven men in the howitzer battery by another, and four by a third—all in the space of two minutes. As the gunners had no doctor attached, I had to clamber down to them and look after their wounded. One poor fellow, whom I had seen sitting on his red-lined great-coat near a gun eating his morning meal, was absolutely riddled by a high-velocity shrapnel. As

the number of shells that kept falling among the Rifle Reserve Battalion seemed to increase rather than diminish, the officer commanding ordered the men to entrench and build sangars for protection. It was after these had been built that I was struck by a stray shrapnel bullet, which broke the top of my helmet but did no further damage, and later on, as if to impress me further, I was hit again. I was sitting behind a well-built sangar, on the back of which Major Stuart-Wortley had spread his great-coat to dry, and on rising a little to light my pipe was knocked head over heels by an explosion. A shell had struck and burst on the sangar behind my head, blowing the rocks that composed it, and Major Stuart-Wortley's great-coat that covered it, to fragments; indeed, nothing of the latter could be found afterwards but the collar and shoulder-straps. These he preserved as a trophy. Either a piece of rock or a piece of shell or large stone struck me on the head, rendering me unconscious, and might have had more disastrous effects but for the protection of a thick cork helmet. As, notwithstanding the protection of the sangars, several more of the men were hit, and as they were not required there, and were unable to rest in any degree of comfort, it was thought advisable to move the regiment round the hill a little further, where the ground was steeper and afforded better cover. Here we built fresh sangars, and rested more peaceably from fire for the remainder of the day; but the proximity of a score of putrid dead animals rendered our new site anything but pleasant, and the last danger was probably worse than the first.

The officers' sangars were practically on the crest line, and we had a fine view of the valley, but had to

lie very low, as bullets and shells kept continually passing over. When dinner-hour came it was quite a sight to observe the food passed up, first from the cook's fire, and then along from one to another as we lay at full length on the ground. The howitzer battery that I have mentioned kept at work all day, and until within an hour of midnight, sometimes firing at minute intervals between each discharge. The Boers never seemed able to locate this battery, so well was it hid, and the only shells they put into it were stray ones. I was greatly struck with the systematic way in which the enemy's guns searched the back of all the hills, every kloof and every valley. They fired as a rule three shells in quick succession, one short range, one long range, and one intermediate. These three shells would succeed each other in the same direction; then there would be a pause, and the enemy would search elsewhere. All day this artillery fire went on, the Boers constantly bringing guns into action and removing them directly ours found their position. They also kept up a constant and annoying long-range rifle-fire.

It was expected that General Buller would renew the attack on Hart's Hill; but this was not done, although the troops there pushed on and reoccupied several of the trenches. No further movement of infantry took place during the day; but as they lay on the low kopjes some losses occurred from enfilade pom-pom fire among Barton's Fusilier Brigade. These included Lieutenant-Colonel C. C. H. Thorold and Lieutenant F. A. Stebbing, of the 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers, and 6 men killed, and Lieutenants C. C. Norman and H. V. V. Kyrke, and 29 men wounded. Lieutenant G. E. S. Salt and Corporal W. Roberts,

of this regiment, brought up their machine-gun by hand, remaining in action until the foresight was shot away and the gun rendered useless. Corporal Roberts was wounded; he afterwards received the Distinguished Service Medal. The 2nd Royal Fusiliers lost Lieutenant Torkington and 37 men wounded. The 1st Rifle Brigade had Captain F. Stone wounded.

That General Buller had devised some new plan was evident, for he had sent some of his artillery that morning back across the Tugela. Amongst the batteries that recrossed the pontoon was 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery. This being detached from the First Cavalry Brigade, it went into action as part of the corps of artillery north-west of Hlangwane, in a good position facing Railway Hill, Barton's Hill being on their right front. General Buller had noted that if he could effect a crossing of the river nearer to the east of Hart's Hill he could turn the enemy's left and drive him from his positions. At the General's request the rugged steep banks of the Tugela from Hlangwane to Eagle's Nest were searched by Lieutenant-Colonel Sandbach, R.E., for a roadway or a place possible to construct one. Colonel Sandbach found a Kaffir path which gave access to the river below the cataract, exactly at the back of General Hart's position. General Buller decided to withdraw the brigades on the left and centre of his present position, bring them across the river, and leave behind only the troops on Hart's Hill with their supports. The other troops crossing the river were to work round to Hart's right, and turn the enemy's left by a wide swoop on their flank. Hart's Brigade, which up to this was General Buller's extreme right, would by this movement become his extreme left. It would now be possible

to take Hart's Hill by a flanking movement instead of a frontal one, the latter being too costly, and perhaps impossible. That evening General Buller ordered the whole force, with certain exceptions, to be ready to march at dawn; he also ordered a road to be made to the river at the back of Hart's Hill along the Kaffir path found by Colonel Sandbach. He withdrew the garrison from Frere and reduced that at Chieveley, calling up every gun and man he could muster to the fighting line. The sharp-sighted enemy had also noted that 'something was up' on General Buller's part. They had seen our artillery recrossing the river; they had also seen our waggons going over. They thought of how they had let the 'Roineks' slip across the Tugela after Spion Kop, and again after Vaal Krantz, and they were anxious to find out whether or not the infantry had evacuated the low kopjes, so in the dark, near midnight, they opened a terrific long-range fire all along their positions. We were rudely awakened from our dreams as we lay on the hard kopjes over Onderbrook Spruit. Some of the men were turned out and stood to arms, some returned the fire. For a short time the musketry was very heavy—the air sang with bullets, mostly high; but the enemy did not press the attack, being satisfied that the 'Roinek' was not going to practise 'slimness' this time, at any rate, and that the army had no intention of slipping away during the dark hours, so they let us go to sleep again. The casualties on the 24th, besides those mentioned on pp. 191, 192, included Captain H. F. Warden (2nd West Surrey) wounded, and Lieutenant E. H. C. King (61st Battery Royal Field Artillery) wounded.

Sunday, the 25th, was a day of peace. General

Buller sent a flag of truce to the Boer Commandants, Louis Botha and Lukas Meyer, to ask for an armistice to enable the wounded lying out on Hart's Hill and other places to be brought in and to have the dead buried. An armistice the Boers formally refused, but agreed that if we made no attack on their positions during the day they would not prevent the wounded being brought away and the dead buried. The refusal of a regular armistice had advantages to both sides. General Buller was able to continue his movements of troops back across the river, and the Boers were able to improve their entrenchments. The Boers insisted on taking as prisoners all the men who were not very badly wounded. The sufferings of the wounded had been terrible. Exposed for forty hours under alternate rain and blazing sun, heat and cold, there they lay in blackened heaps, intermingled with the dying and already offensive dead. Without food or water,* except in the case of a few men to whom it had been thrown by their comrades in the advanced trenches, they had to endure the fire both of friend and foe. The artillery appear to have been told to bombard the hill again on the 24th; they were, however, stopped by General Hart. The sufferings of these men must be almost without parallel in the annals of the war.

The temporary truce worked well, and it was a strange, weird thing to see mutual opponents talking and walking about on the very ground which the day before they had so strenuously battled for, and which two days later was to be again the theatre of blood-

* It is related that some of these unfortunate Inniskillings endeavoured to catch the rain that fell in a drenching shower on the 24th in their helmets.

shed. Slouch-hatted Boers, with unkempt beards and ragged, faded civilian clothes, conversed freely with our helmeted, khaki-clothed officers and men. I saw General Lyttelton there, his tall figure the centre of a group. 'When will it all be over?' said a Boer to someone. 'As soon as you're tired of it and give in,' was the reply. 'Fighting is our business and what we are paid for.' In the afternoon, burials having been completed, the silence of the day still continued, and was only interrupted by the roaring of the Tugela below us and the singing of the birds in the mimosa-trees. Even to the latter the cessation of the continuous booming of guns and crackle of musketry was a relief.

During the day considerable movements in the disposition of General Buller's forces took place. All the troops except two brigades and the 73rd Battery Royal Field Artillery recrossed to the eastern side of the Tugela. Two 4·7 naval guns on platform mountings arrived as reinforcements from Chieveley. Four naval guns were placed on the western slopes of Monte Cristo ridge, and a similar battery on the spurs of Hlangwane. The 5-inch siege battery and some 4·7 naval guns took up a position in line, in the centre of the Hlangwane plateau, and a number of field-guns were kept adjacent to this. Some of our men, who had been taken prisoners by the enemy during the last few days and who had either escaped or had been released, rejoined. They brought in piteous stories of the treatment to which they had been subjected, and further evidence of the barbarity of the enemy to our wounded. One man of the Rifle Reserve Battalion told me he had been taken prisoner and detained all night. He saw dozens of our wounded lying out

within 10 yards of the enemy's trenches. He heard their groans and cries for water in the darkness, and the enemy had suffered them to die under their very eyes without any assistance or succour. He also stated that he saw a drummer-boy of the Royal Lancaster Regiment lying wounded near a trench; towards dusk a Boer walked out and shot him dead in cold blood. Another wounded Lancaster man who lay near, seeing this, raised himself with some exertion, clutched up his rifle, shot this Boer dead at 20 yards, and then fell back exhausted.

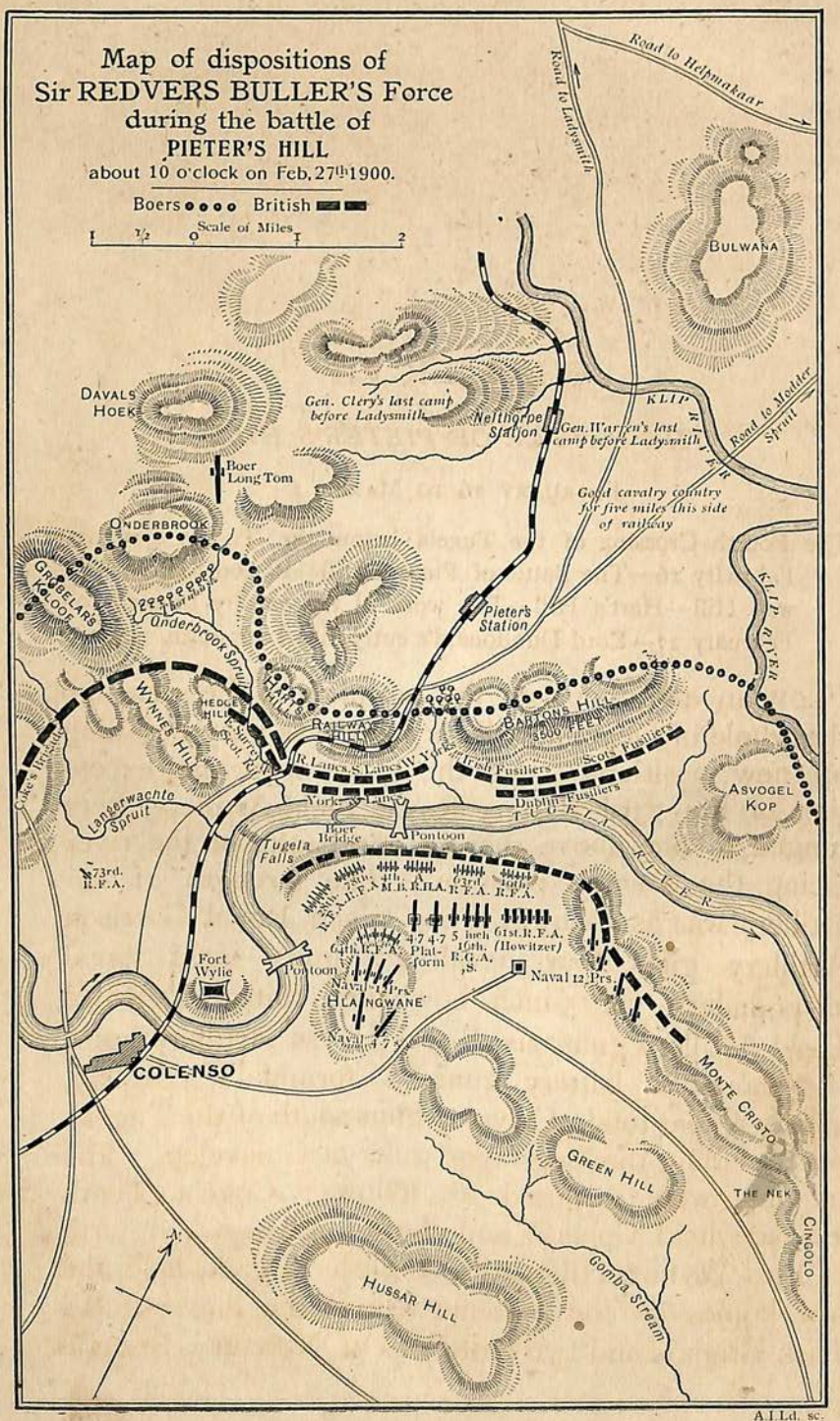
That night the Rifle Reserve Battalion received orders to bivouac on the hill where we had rested since the morning of the 24th, near the Onderbrook Spruit; we were to send all our baggage across the river during the hours of darkness, and follow on ourselves at daybreak. Of necessity, my medical and surgical panniers had to go with the baggage; they were packed with my kit and the regimental heliographs and other signalling apparatus in the Maltese cart. This cart met with an accident while crossing the pontoon in the dark: one of the boards of the great bridge, getting loose, terrified the mules; they stampeded, and, notwithstanding all attempts of the drivers and escort to steady them, plunged wildly into the river, which at this particular spot was very deep and swift. All was lost, except the mules, which broke loose.

About nine o'clock that night, while lying asleep alongside the other officers of the regiment behind the sangars of the top of the hill, I was awakened by sharp rifle-fire. As my perceptibility returned, I found that it was centred on us. The enemy were making a night attack under cover of a pitchy dark-

ness, and probably with an idea that we would be unprepared after the day's armistice. A large party of the Boers had crept up unobserved to the back of the hill on which the regiment lay. A challenge from our outposts was a signal for a volley of Mauser hail. Bullets came over us as thick as hail; it has never been my lot to experience the like before or since. Individual rifle-reports were indistinguishable, so rapid and so loud was the roar of musketry. They seemed to me to rebound from every stone of my sangar, the crevices between the rocks of which were lit up with the flashes of the musketry discharge ahead. Every crevice seemed magnified into a large loophole for a nickel-covered, uninvited visitor—perhaps a visitor of death. The officers around me were awake, too; they came out from under their great-coats, which were our only coverings, as all blankets had gone with the baggage. They were fully dressed and booted, for we had lain down as we stood. These officers had then a whispered conversation with their Commanding Officer, Major Stuart-Wortley, who, with his ever-conspicuous coolness, gave directions to each. They, having received their orders just as coolly, one by one made their way down the hill to their respective companies on hands and knees, for it was impossible to stand and live. Dim figures came up the hill in the same manner; no delay ensued, although the greatest caution had to be observed. These dark forms, who were the men of the regiment, lined our sangars (one lay each side of me); then the whispered order was passed along, 'Charge magazines,' 'Fix swords' (the Rifle Brigade and King's Royal Rifles always allude to their bayonets as 'swords'). Not a shot was to be fired without an order. As I lay still

behind my sangar with the sturdy riflemen grasping their terrible weapons on either side, I was greatly impressed by the coolness of all, and the way in which things went like 'clockwork; never, indeed, had I appreciated the discipline of the British Army as I did on that night. My medical orderlies had also come up, and I hoped my first-aid stock would not run short, in view of any serious attack. After nearly an hour's patient wait, during which I had to attend to a few cases—no serious ones—Major Stuart-Wortley passed along the line. He had located the position of the enemy, and after pointing it out to his officers, and being satisfied they had a good target, he gave the order to fire. Rifles and Maxims now bélched out all along our lines, and continued for some time; eventually the enemy's fire was got under, and towards midnight it ceased—they had retired.

Next morning a pile of dead horses in the valley showed us where the Boers had been, and that our fire had not been ineffective. No dead or wounded were visible; these had evidently been removed, according to custom.


Map of dispositions of
Sir REDVERS BULLER'S Force
during the battle of
PIETER'S HILL
about 10 o'clock on Feb. 27th 1900.
Boers
British
Scale of Miles
Road to Helpmakaar
Road to Ladysmith
BULWANA
DAVALS HOEK
Gen. Clery's last camp before Ladysmith
Nelthorpe Station
Gen. Warren's last camp before Ladysmith
KLIP RIVER
Road to Modder Spruit
Boer Long Tom
Good cavalry country for five miles this side of railway
ONDERBROOK
GROBELAR'S KLOOF
Onderbrook Spruit
Pieter's Station
KLIP RIVER
HEDGE HILL
WYNNE'S HILL
RAILWAY HILL
BARTON'S HILL
1500 FEET
R. Lancs.
S. Lancs.
W. York.
Irish Fusiliers
Scots Fusiliers
York. Lancs.
Dublin Fusiliers
ASVOGEL KOP
Langerwachte Spruit
Boer Bridge
Pontoon
Tugela Falls
73rd. R.F.A.
R.F.L.F.
4th. M.B.
R.H.A.
63rd R.F.A.
100th R.F.A.
47
5 inch 61st. R.F.A.
47 Platform
16th. (Howitzer) R.G.A.
64th R.F.A.
Fort Wylie
Pontoon
Naval 12 Prs.
Naval 12 Prs.
HLANGWANE
Naval 4.7's
COLENSO
MONTE CRISTO
GREEN HILL
THE NEK
CINGOLO
HUSSAR HILL
Gomba Stream
A.I.Ld. sc.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF PIETER'S HILL

FEBRUARY 26 TO MARCH 1

The Fourth Crossing of the Tugela below the Tugela Cataract, February 26—The Battle of Pieter's Hill—Barton's Hill—Railway Hill—Hart's Hill—The work of the cavalry brigades on February 27—Lord Dundonald's entry into Ladysmith.

FROM an early hour on the morning of February 26 the whole of General Buller's army was busy in taking up new positions. All the guns, with the exception of the 73rd Battery Royal Field Artillery, were ranged in line above the eastern banks of the river facing the enemy's position. The strength of our artillery was as follows: Four 5-inch Royal Garrison Artillery guns, four naval 4·7 guns, eight naval 12-pounders, six 5-inch howitzers, thirty-six Royal Field Artillery guns, six Royal Horse Artillery guns, six mountain battery guns—a formidable display, giving a sum total of seventy guns south of the Tugela, not including the long-range guns at Chieveley. The infantry were disposed as follows: Coke's Tenth Brigade held Colenso and the kopjes west and north of Fort Wylie; Hildyard's English Brigade held the low kopjes on the extreme left of the line; Hart's Irish Brigade and two battalions of Norcott's Brigade

held the slopes of Hart's Hill and the river gorge beside this hill; Barton's Fusilier Brigade and Kitchener's Lancashire Brigade, with the two remaining battalions of Norcott's Brigade, had crossed the river to the Hlangwane plateau; the 1st Border Regiment joined the main body from Chieveley; Dundonald's Irregular Cavalry Brigade took up a position on the Nek between Monte Cristo and Cingolo. At daylight the Rifle Reserve Battalion received orders to join their brigade on the Hlangwane plateau. They were the last regiment to cross the pontoon, which was shortly afterwards taken up.

Immediately after crossing I had an investigation made relating to the loss of my medical panniers in the river the night before, and accompanied a party of men to search the stream. About a mile lower down we succeeded in finding and rescuing one, which, after a thorough overhauling and drying of its contents in the sun, proved to be little the worse for submersion. I then wired to Chieveley for another to replace the lost one, and *received it in a few hours' time.*

Throughout the day our artillery kept up a slow bombardment of the enemy's position; this was done to enable every battery and every gun to get the exact ranges of all targets. These latter were systematically named on a rough map supplied to each battery—a most important arrangement, as will be seen later on. The following telegram was received from Her Majesty the Queen by Sir Redvers Buller, and communicated by him to the troops:

'I have heard with the deepest concern of the heavy losses sustained by my brave Irish soldiers. I desire to express my sympathy and my admiration of the

splendid fighting qualities which they have exhibited throughout these trying operations.'

Sir Redvers Buller sent the following reply to Her Majesty:

Sir Redvers Buller has, on the part of the Irish Brigade, to thank the Queen for her gracious telegram of sympathy and encouragement.'

Her Majesty's sympathetic message showed the troops that the eyes of the nation were on them; it proved a connecting-link between the whole army on the eve of a great battle, and added an extra fillip to their already intense desire for victory.

Some movements of the enemy near the Klip River were observed during the day; a certain number were seen moving across the drifts of this river, evidently with the intention of extending their left flank. The long-range naval guns in Ladysmith dropped some shells among another party of Boers, who were attempting to form a bridge or drift across the Klip River higher up, south of Bulwana, and prevented them from carrying out this work. The Royal Engineers also worked hard at the new road down to the Tugela below the cataract, and had it completed by 6 p.m.

The dawn of February 27, the anniversary of Majuba, broke cloudy. Almost before the dark outlines of the Pieter's range of hills were evident, our artillery opened the day's work, battery after battery sending their messengers of death — lyddite and shrapnel—to herald in the day—a day never to be forgotten in the annals of this war.

General Buller's plan of attack was as follows: He

had noted that the troops on Hart's Hill, who were occupying the post taken at such loss by the Irish Brigade on the 23rd and 24th, gave him such a position in front of the enemy's left that, should he be able to make him retain his strong post on their right, above Onderbrook and Langerwachte Spruits, under the belief that we would attack them there, and at the same time if a crossing could be made over the Tugela north and east of Hart's Hill, our troops, who had now crossed, would be able to turn the enemy's left, and drive him from all his positions before he had time to send reinforcements to his now threatened left flank.

I have already shown how General Buller moved this attacking force and his artillery across the river on the 25th and 26th; and it is now necessary, in order to understand the Battle of Pieter's Hill, to describe the position taken up by all the troops engaged. I shall merely indicate the posts occupied by the artillery and those of the infantry who acted as a retaining and defending body, leaving over until the actual description of the battle the disposition of the attacking force.

On our left Coke's Tenth Brigade occupied the kopjes north and west of Colenso; he was supported by the 73rd Battery Royal Field Artillery behind him, and the heavy naval guns at Chieveley (one 6-inch, three 4·7's, and two 12-pounders); these guns covered our left flank as well as the Colenso-Ladysmith road, and the deep kloofs and dongas on each side of it by which any force could approach on our left. In continuation of General Coke's right, the hills around the Onderbrook and Langerwachte Spruits were held by the Royal Fusiliers and Royal Welch Fusiliers of the Sixth Brigade; also the 2nd Devons, 2nd West Surreys,

two companies 2nd West Yorks, and two companies 2nd East Surreys, of the Second Brigade, with four companies 2nd Scottish Rifles of the Fourth Brigade under General Hildyard.

On General Hildyard's right, the lower positions taken by the Irish Brigade on the 23rd and 24th were still occupied by the 1st Durham Light Infantry, 1st Rifle Brigade, six companies 2nd East Surrey, and four companies 2nd Scottish Rifles, under Brigadier Norcott; the Connaught Rangers, Royal Inniskillings, and Imperial Light Infantry, under General Hart.

Our artillery on the eastern side of the Tugela were placed as follows: On the high crest of the northern spur of Hlangwane, arranged in two tiers, were the 64th and 17th Batteries Royal Field Artillery, two naval 4·7-inch guns, and four naval 12-pounder quick-firing guns. On the western spurs of Hlangwane the 28th and 78th Batteries Royal Field Artillery, both of the latter supporting the infantry over Onderbrook and Langerwachte Spruits, the 28th Battery facing west up the former, and the 78th Battery facing northward up the Langerwachte Spruit. East of the 78th Battery were the 7th Battery Royal Field Artillery, then four guns of the 4th Mountain Battery, then 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery; on an eminence called Green Hill the 19th Battery Royal Field Artillery, and behind and under cover of this hill the 61st Howitzer Battery. Behind the last-named battery, on a height called Fuzzy Hill, were the four 5-inch guns of the 16th Company Royal Garrison Artillery and 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery.

On our extreme right lay Monte Cristo, and high up on its northern slopes two mountain battery guns were mounted, while behind these along the crest line

were four long-range naval 12-pounders. These long-range guns could enfilade, and even take in reverse, some of the enemy's trenches on Barton's Hill. There was in all a battery of seventy-six guns spread over a front of over four and a half miles, not including the six long-range guns at Chieveley and a number of smaller fry—Maxims and Colts—amongst the infantry. The whole southern banks of the Tugela, from the point just opposite to where the Onderbrook Spruit joins that river to as far as the northern limit of Monte Cristo, were lined by the Border Regiment and the Rifle Reserve Battalion; Monte Cristo and our right flank were likewise lined by the Irregular Cavalry Brigade, under Lord Dundonald. The latter took up their position at 6.30 a.m.

If our position was a long one, that occupied by the enemy was very much longer. It may be described as consisting of three long curves, the first curve extending from beyond the Colenso-Ladysmith road on the west, and running, with its concavity facing us, to the western side of Hart's Hill. This curve passes over Grobelar's Kloof and Onderbrook Mountain, and has been already described. Continuous with this, the second curve commenced on the east of Hart's Hill, with its convexity facing us, ending on the western slopes of Barton's Hill. The third curve began west of Barton's Hill, passing in an irregular manner round our right to the north and west of Monte Cristo; its concavity faced our right flank. Its importance was more imaginary than real, as it was the only part of the Boer position which was not entrenched. It was the middle curve, lying in the centre of the enemy's position, that became the battlefield of the day. It consisted of three well-defined, heavily-fortified hills,

known as Barton's Hill, Railway Hill, and Hart's Hill, from right (or west) to left (or east) respectively, these three hills being in the vicinity of Pieter's Station, giving to the day's engagement the name of the Battle of Pieter's Hill.

General Buller's plan of attack was explained early in the morning to all concerned, and was as follows:

The infantry on the north of the Tugela were to hold their positions. The enemy's centre was to be assaulted by a direct infantry attack, first on Barton's Hill, and then on Railway Hill and Hart's Hill, in such a way as to turn his left flank. This attacking party was under General Warren, and was to comprise the following troops: 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, under General Barton, to assault Barton's Hill; the 2nd Royal Lancasters, 2nd West Yorks, 1st South Lancashires, and 1st York and Lancaster Regiment (which had arrived from Chieveley), under Brigadier Kitchener, to assault Railway Hill.

The 1st Durham Light Infantry, 1st Rifle Brigade, 2nd East Surreys, and a half-battalion of the 2nd Scottish Rifles, under Brigadier Norcott, with the Connaught Rangers, Royal Inniskillings, and Imperial Light Infantry, under General Hart, were to assault Hart's Hill.

Barton's Hill was to be attacked first, then Railway Hill, and finally Hart's Hill. The artillery bombardment commenced at dawn, and increased in intensity during the morning. The long line of riflemen lining the southern banks of the river, with whom were all the available machine-guns, also kept up a heavy fire to suppress sniping, and, what was more particular, to prevent the enemy from watching the movements of

the attacking party on their way across the river; it also hindered any of the former from occupying the lower parts of the hill about to be attacked: for to do this, they would have had to cross a bullet-swept zone. This method of preparing an infantry advance by well-directed long-range rifle-fire was decidedly effective. The men were sitting under cover of rocks, with their rifles elevated at an angle of about forty-five degrees; many of them were not discharging their weapons from the shoulder. The range was from 2,500 to over 3,000 yards, and the object was just to make the bullets 'skim' the sky-line. Next day, when walking over the plain behind the hills, I was struck with the number of dead animals and the quantity of bullets lying about. Such a fire as this must have considerably harassed the enemy.

By 10.30 a.m. the new pontoon bridge at the back of Hart's Hill was ready for the attacking party to cross. At this moment General Buller received a 'Clear the line' telegram from Lord Roberts, announcing the surrender of General Cronje at Paardeberg. The good news was at once communicated to the troops, and as each regiment heard it, cheer after cheer re-echoed through the morning air. The thought of bringing off a double event on Majuba Day gave a further impetus to the enthusiasm of the troops.

General Barton's party was the first to cross the pontoon, where some wag in the Royal Engineers had erected a signpost with a hand painted on it pointing north, and 'To Ladysmith' inscribed in capitals alongside. This was the subject of much cheerful comment for the men as they passed by. Barton's Brigade, having crossed, turned to the right, and were marched down the river-bed. The advance was very slow, as

all had to walk in single file, there being no path, and their course was strewn with rocks overhung by steep and rugged cliffs. In many places men had to wade knee-deep in the rapids, the reserve ammunition on mules and the signalling apparatus accompanying them in this fashion. Arrived at the foot of Barton's Hill, they had a considerable delay, to permit the tail of their column to arrive. Rest was not ill-timed, as they had now to ascend an almost precipitous cliff of about 500 feet, and then to assault and carry the hill-tops.

It was 12.30 before the upward advance was made. The Scots Fusiliers were on the right, the Irish Fusiliers on the left, with the Dublin Fusiliers in support. As the brigade went on to the attack, they came under a heavy enfilade of pom-pom and Creusot fire from the enemy's left. The summit of Barton's Hill consisted of three distinct kopjes. That on the left was taken at the first rush by the Irish Fusiliers with admirable precision; the whole brigade advanced against the next, and here, while crossing the open ground between the kopjes, the Irish lost 2 officers and 14 men killed, and 6 officers and 70 men wounded, out of a total of three companies. Notwithstanding this heavy loss, the assaulting force drove the enemy from their post. The third or northern knoll on Barton's Hill was for some reason not simultaneously attacked. During the delay the enemy had been reinforced at that place, and soon opened a deadly fire, causing many more casualties among our men. The Dublin Fusiliers advanced against this obstacle, and with a dashing bayonet charge carried the position. They paid a heavy toll for their daring, losing some sixty men.

Private Kelly, of the Dublins, showed conspicuous gallantry in going forward under a heavy fire to carry away a wounded officer; he also brought up and distributed ammunition to the firing line from the rear. Sergeant-Major John Steele, 2nd Scottish Fusiliers, under a heavy cross-fire, built up a stone sangar round his Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Carr, who lay wounded, and protected him until he was removed. Sergeant Taylor, Lance-Corporal Shields, and Private Farr, of the same regiment, were also mentioned for conspicuous gallantry in this affair. Lance-Corporal O'Neill, 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers, after much courageous conduct, was shot down by the enemy. His body was found beside a dead Boer, whom he had transfixed with his bayonet.

At about 3 p.m. Brigadier Kitchener's Brigade, which had been resting on the slopes over the river-bed below Railway Hill, advanced to the attack of this hill. Railway Hill is separated from Barton's Hill by a deep ravine, studded with boulders and thick bush. Along the eastern side the railway to Pieter's Station winds through deep cuttings. Hart's Hill lies on its west, being separated by a long Nek lined with trenches.

Kitchener's Brigade, after scrambling up an almost precipitous rocky cliff, the crest of which, about 400 feet from the river-bed, crosses open ground, afforded an excellent field of fire for the enemy occupying the summits of the hill and the railway cuttings. The advance was made on a very wide front, the Royal Lancasters on the left, and the West Yorks and South Lancashires on the right, the York and Lancaster Regiment acting as supports.

General Kitchener then ordered a direct assault,

The West Yorks, diverting slightly to their right, made for the railway cutting, which was strongly held by a party of Boers with a pom-pom and a Maxim. The Royal Lancaster Regiment were to attack the Nek, but through some mistake this regiment, seeing the strongly-fortified position of Hart's Hill on their left, from which they were being severely raked by the enemy's fire, turned half-left, and went straight at it with the bayonet. General Kitchener at once remedied the mistake, and directed the South Lancashires to fill the central gap, which had been left open. During the delay thus caused the West Yorks had got round to the railway cutting, and poured in a heavy fire on the Boer left flank, dislodging the enemy from the ravine and capturing their Maxim.

The Nek against which the South Lancashires had advanced was also strongly held. For a short time the progress of this regiment was impeded; then on the left of one of the Boer trenches appeared a small, eager party of glittering bayonets. A little force, not more than a dozen men, had worked its way round the Boer flank. A charge, a rush, in which Colonel McCarthy O'Leary fell while gallantly leading his regiment, and the situation was saved. Second Lieutenant C. H. Marsh, of the same regiment, notwithstanding that a wound which he had received at Spion Kop had broken out and was bleeding, behaved in a gallant manner after his company commander was wounded—encouraging his men, who were exposed to a heavy shrapnel, machine-gun, and rifle fire. Private Bridgehouse, of the 1st South Lancashire, proved himself worthy of mention for his great coolness and resource on the same occasion.

The crest of Railway Hill had yet to be gained; on

it our lyddite and shrapnel were still bursting. To advance seemed like courting death from the enemy's bullets, which rebounded like hail from a concrete slab, throwing up puffs of red dust. Over the sangars at the top, silhouetted against the evening sky—for it was now close to five o'clock—could be discerned the slouch hats and moving rifles of the enemy. Our artillery were still pounding these latter; lyddite and shrapnel were bursting simultaneously among them. Showers of rock, earth, and splinters were falling on all sides. Never did Brother Boer hold his ground with greater personal peril than on this day. If the attack was superb, the defence was heroic.

What were our men to do? To stay where they were without cover and in the open was foolhardy; to retreat was disgrace; to proceed was exposure, not only to the enemy's fire, but to that of our own guns. The question was soon answered. A general advance with fixed bayonets was ordered. It matters little to historians to know which regiment gained the summit first; they all claimed the honour. Let them do so, for where all are good it is invidious to pick and choose.

When the West Yorks had reached the crest, and while they had to run the risk of a severe fire, not only from the enemy, but also from our own gunners, who mistook them for the foe as they sprang to the sky-line, some of the regiment placed their helmets on their bayonets and waved them at our artillery. This action, though offering an aim to the Boer marksmen, was seen by our gunners, who ceased firing. Cheer after cheer fell on our ears, and we knew that Railway Hill was ours. Our men could now be seen kneeling on the summit and firing after the retreating Boers, who

could also be made out as they hastened towards Pieter's Station. Barton's Brigade also gave them a few parting volleys, as a good 'send-off.'

During the attack on Railway Hill, General Kitchener reports that Sergeant J. Miller, 1st York and Lancaster Regiment, did excellent work under his own personal observation. His Maxim had to endure a heavy fire, but he never slacked off or made a mistake, and its coming into action on our right rendered advance possible.

The capture of Hart's Hill alone remains to be described. When the Royal Lancaster Regiment, through some mistake, left their own brigade and turned their attention to this hill, General Hart's and Colonel Norcott's Brigades simultaneously advanced from their position. The Durhams, on our left front, who still held the trenches captured by the Inniskillings on the 23rd, had the advantage of a useful start on the trenches and sangars, whose possession by the Boers had cost the Irishmen so dearly on that black but glorious Friday evening.

The slopes of Hart's Hill were alive with the active figures of the infantry. Assaulted on three sides by three separate bodies of troops, supported by an artillery fire of seventy guns, was it any wonder that some of the Boers, about sixty in number, ran like hunted rats from their trenches? A tall man, a huge fellow in a dark jersey, was seen to go out boldly and try to rally them. Returning, he sprang on the top of a sangar, and while in the act of emptying his magazine into the advancing infantry, a 50-pound lyddite shell burst right upon him. Thus vanished the last defender of Hart's Hill!

The infantry now occupied the crest line, and,

having put up their sights, poured a heavy fire into the fleeing Boers. The artillery increased their range and did likewise. Many of the enemy held up their hands as a token of surrender, and were made prisoners. The majority retired in the direction of Pieter's Station, some slowly and sulkily, keeping up a long-range fire from every suitable place, and fired on by the infantry from the crests of Railway and Barton's Hills, as well as pursued by the vicious bursting of long-range shrapnel.

About 5.30 p.m. Dundonald got orders to escort three batteries of artillery across the Tugela with all the men that he could collect, and thus assist Sir Charles Warren in pounding the enemy; but his force was stopped at the pontoon by Sir Redvers Buller in person, who considered it too late for anything further to be done that night in the rocky and broken country into which the enemy were retiring. Two pom-poms and two Creusots were firing from the direction of Doorn Kloof on our left, and other guns from some distant point on our right. The position of these, invisible all day, was now betrayed by their flickering flashes in the dark.

A counter-attack being expected from the right of Barton's Hill, where a considerable body of the foe had collected, the cavalry were sent back to our right flank on Monte Cristo to strengthen that place. It was well that this Boer rear-guard was not disregarded, for they soon opened a heavy fire on the Scots Fusiliers from the most northern kopje of Barton's Hill, inflicting heavy loss. I was on this hill assisting in the removal of the wounded when the firing commenced. We all took cover. I lay down among some rocks alongside the infantry, and suddenly felt what I

thought was the flick of a whip on the back of my thigh. It was something a little more serious, and fortunately Lieutenant H. B. Onraet, R.A.M.C., the medical officer attached to the Scots Fusiliers, promptly came to my assistance. He bandaged me up and returned to the top of the hill. Not ten minutes afterwards, as I was taking a rest preparatory to going down the hill, Lieutenant Onraet was shot and carried back to me. He was dead! Such was the ending of a young life—his first campaign, and not a year in the service. He had succoured a brother officer one moment, and the next he was himself brought back to the same place for similar aid. As I lay still, with my wound smarting and my limbs stiff, I could not help thinking of war and its chances, when 'one is taken and another left.'

Something white moving in a bush close by made me almost start, so tired did I feel and so strained were my nerves. At first it seemed to be a handkerchief, but as it moved again I thought it was a chicken, for I had seen the men carrying some, which they had found 'straying' in the Boer laager close by. It moved again, and I saw it was a dog. I whistled; it came up wagging its tail, and we made friends. I spoke to it in English, but it did not heed me; I then tried Dutch, and it understood. It was a Boer dog—a white spaniel spotted with dark liver patches. It wore a collar bearing its owner's name and the Transvaal arms. It was very tired, and evidently very hungry. It had lost its master—probably he was dead; anyhow, it nestled to me, and licked first my face and then the bandage on my damaged limb. I made up my mind to foster it. That dog has been

with me ever since. It followed me on foot for close on 500 miles, through all four colonies of South Africa, and it is now under my parental roof—at home.

Some of the Dublin Fusiliers were now rushing by. I recognised their accents as they came up. They were charging along with fixed bayonets on their way to reinforce the Scots Fusiliers. What they took me for I do not know, but one huge, hulking fellow evidently suspected me to be a crouching Boer, and drew back for a lunge. I shouted at him, and, with the observation, 'Right! be aisy, now!' he passed on and disappeared. Seeing that this was no place for me, I got up, and made my way slowly and stiffly down the hill, leading my newly-annexed dog on the end of a piece of bandage. At the pontoon I got a lift back to Sir Charles Warren's camp near Monte Cristo. Here there were close on 100 Boer prisoners. A wretched, dejected lot they looked—some, old men with patriarchal beards, aquiline noses and cadaverous, pinched cheeks; others still boys, with smooth, round, yellow, shining faces and oval eyes, all clothed in ragged, patched civilian clothes, slouch hats with dirty coloured bands round them, different colours denoting different commandos. Some were talking to the 'Tommies,' others were getting their injuries dressed. One haggard, middle-aged burgher who was near me was waiting his turn to get a wound in his thigh dressed. A long, ragged splinter of shell, partly covered with khaki-coloured paint, protruded from his wound through his breeches. His face, hands and clothes were stained a canary yellow from a lyddite shell which had burst near him. Small, dry, hard droplets of the half-burnt explosive hung from the

threads of his torn garments and from his singed hair. I brought him a tin of bovril, and asked if I could dress his wound. He was rather silent and surly at first, but soon thawed, and entered into conversation with me. 'Such a day,' he said, 'and such a slaughter! Our cause is lost; let me die.' He told me that he alone was left alive from the occupants of one trench on the left of Barton's Hill above the ravine. A 4·7 naval shell dropped into the trench, and on exploding it blew all the occupants save himself into eternity. The sangar in front and a tree beside it were utterly demolished. Questioned by me on the effects of lyddite, he said it was useless, that unless one burst in an enclosed place it was hardly so destructive as common shell. Earlier in the campaign the burghers were afraid of it. He had been in all the engagements in Natal, and did not fear it more than common shell. Shrapnel was much more to be dreaded; the bullets came down so straight that there was no taking cover from it. Questioned as to his opinion on the fumes of lyddite, he said they were different in their action on different individuals. Some they made exhilaratingly drunk. For the moment such a man became absolutely reckless; his nerves were so stimulated that he felt equal to almost any deed. On others the fumes had a different effect, making them sick. He often saw men vomit who were in close proximity to a bursting lyddite shell. The explosion made most people deaf, and gave them besides a severe headache. Both of these last effects he was now suffering from himself. I had afterwards an opportunity of verifying his remarks with regard to nausea, headache, and deafness among our own men. A sergeant of the Royal Lancaster Regiment told me that a

lyddite shell burst within a few feet of him. The explosion knocked him off his feet. He was at first dazed, and then vomited. His khaki was stained yellow, he was rendered deaf, and had a headache for twenty-four hours afterwards.

Our casualties were not heavy, considering that the line of advance was an almost frontal one of nearly three miles, being 63 killed, 417 wounded, 28 missing —total 508. They were, at any rate, much less than they would have been were it not for the admirable manner in which the artillery, under Colonel Parsons and Captain Jones, R.N., was served. It is certain that the enemy suffered much more severely. Also it must be remembered that before the infantry advanced to the attack of their respective hills along the Tugela, Dundonald's Brigade and some infantry, with a large number of machine guns, had got into the rocky ground on the south bank of the river, whence the latter kept up a terrific fire on the opposite slopes and enabled the infantry to deploy along the river-bed and advance almost to the first crest line without serious opposition. The firing of our men and the answering discharge of the Boers, which lasted for hours, echoed and re-echoed in the narrow valley of the Tugela, and made an indescribable din, something like the roar of an angry sea on a rocky coast.

A well-known Boer in Pretoria acknowledged that Pieter's was to them the most expensive fight of the whole war. Our burial-parties interred more than 100 of their dead, and about 90 were taken prisoners; 40 wounded were left on the field, all probably too badly injured for the enemy to remove them. They had, however, taken with them no less than 300 of their wounded. The gain on our side was immense,

for it annihilated the strength of the enemy's hold of the country south of Ladysmith, practically raising the siege, and sent the great majority of Botha's burghers on the run; the Free Staters, at any rate, scuttled that night for the Berg. This fine achievement did much to compensate the troops for the disappointments of Colenso, Spion Kop, and Vaal Krantz; for though they had never lost heart in their work, they were yet suffering from the effects of continuous fighting, bad water, preserved rations, and want of sleep and proper clothes. They had followed their leader, General Buller, never questioning, never doubting, even through the dark, dark days of Colenso and Spion Kop, and they were prepared to follow him anywhere and at any time. Never was a General more confidently looked up to through adversity than was our Natal Chief. He sought it not, but the feeling came spontaneously from every heart. Crippled as he was for want of maps, having for months to face a position impregnable to his force, he never flinched at a check, but resolutely returned for a fresh attack. Critics have said—and let them say it—that the progress of the Natal Army was slow; but let them visit the ground and consider its nature, as well as our material and the responsibility for loss of life in forcing these positions. If they will but weigh, too, what a defeat of the relieving force would have meant, not only to Ladysmith, but to the Empire, it is highly probable their opinions will change.

The nineteenth anniversary of Majuba proved a day of compensation for General Buller's army in Natal, as well as for their comrades with Lord Roberts in the Free State; and the history of the South African War will contain no more glorious

record than the week's fighting which culminated in the Battle of Pieter's Hill. It has been also asserted that the Boers were disheartened before this battle by the news of Cronje's disaster at Paardeberg, and this had warned them that they must draw in from Natal. But General Buller's army, once Monte Cristo had been seized, once the riddle of the Tugela had been solved, would inevitably have forced their way in triumph to Ladysmith, Cronje or no Cronje.

After their evening meal, well satisfied with the day's work, the men sat in groups round the bivouac-fires, singing such songs as 'Soldiers of the Queen,' etc., to the accompaniment of heavy Mauser rifle-firing in the Boer lines near Ladysmith. The cause of the latter was unknown, and has since been ascribed to panic.

Although the Pieter's position was now in our hands, it was expected that General Buller could not avoid another action before getting into Ladysmith. Bulwana Mountain, that evil neighbour which had worked such damage on Ladysmith with its Long Toms, still confronted us, and west of this, running east, were several chains of kopjes, extending to the high hills of Doorn Kloof on our left. These, though not of any considerable height, formed a pretty formidable position, as to reach them the army would have to pass over the Nelthorpe plain, which was devoid of cover. General Buller determined to reconnoitre these hills during the day and rest his army, and to attack Bulwana on March 1. A helio message was sent into Ladysmith stating that he had beaten the enemy thoroughly, and that he was sending his cavalry on to reconnoitre.

At daybreak on the morning of the 28th Buller's

cavalry, consisting of two independent brigades—the 1st Cavalry Brigade, Royal Dragoons, 13th Hussars, and 'A' Battery R.H.A. under Brigadier-General Burn-Murdoch, and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, mostly irregulars, under Lord Dundonald—received orders to reconnoitre the enemy. The latter brigade consisted of T.M.I. under Colonel Thorneycroft; S.A.L.H. under Colonel Byng, and the Composite Mounted Infantry under Major Gough, the last-named regiment about 300 strong, including Natal Carbineers, Natal Police, King's Royal Rifles, Dublin Fusiliers, and Imperial Light Horse. The fighting on the Tugela had, however, so reduced Dundonald's force that the total muster of all his regiments was on this morning not more than some 1,000 men. Before the sun rose he sent on three officers, patrols of Thorneycroft's, in advance, to get in touch with the enemy in the Pieter's direction. Unfortunately, a heavy waggon broke down the pontoon just after these patrols had passed over, and it took an hour to mend the breach and get the remainder of the brigade through. On emerging from the picket lines, Thorneycroft's patrols reported that the enemy were in the rocky ground by Pieter's Station, and in the scrub towards the Klip River. Lord Dundonald sent some of the South African Light Horse towards the Klip River, and advanced the brigade, which came under hot fire about half a mile from the outpost line, towards Pieter's Station, several horses of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, who were leading, galloping back riderless. The brigade was now formed up under cover of some rising ground. While Captain Arthur Hill, M.P.'s, battery of machine-guns played upon the rocky ridges in front where the enemy was posted, General Lyttelton's Division and some

artillery were sent in support to the railway-line, and they marched unopposed along it and the Boer road to the position captured on the previous day. Arriving at Pieter's railway-station, where a train of about twenty trucks was found, they were shelled by a small gun and a pom-pom from a low hill to the westward. The 63rd Battery came into action on the Nek between Hart's and Railway Hills, and cleared the kopjes of the few snipers that remained.

Dundonald's Brigade, having driven the enemy back again, advanced and took up their ground behind a crest which overlooked a Boer laager. This camp was full of Boers, who presently emerged in a dense column, and were coming straight towards the brigade, when the machine-guns, which had in the meantime been brought on, again opened upon them, emptying many saddles, and scattering the column to both flanks. Burn-Murdoch's Regular Cavalry with 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery now proceeded to the right towards the southern slopes of Bulwana, where they found the enemy strongly posted in a very rugged country, with three guns, which shelled the 13th Hussars heavily. Both cavalry brigades were now spread out—Burn-Murdoch in the open country on the right, and Dundonald's without artillery in the hills on the left—the enemy playing on both brigades with his artillery whenever opportunity offered. Under Bulwana ran a road, and along this numbers of waggons and several hundred mounted Boers could be seen. It was thought that these were only moving to Bulwana preparatory to taking up another position.

Over Ladysmith floated a balloon. Had we known what its occupants saw, the Boer retreat might, by a combined advance of infantry guns, and mounted men,

have been turned into a complete rout. It appears that the garrison of the town were depressed at not hearing our heavy guns in the morning; they thought that the relief force had again retired. When the balloon went up, the aeronaut, Captain Tilney, saw our infantry occupying Pieter's position, observed the cavalry reconnoitring, and then noted that the Boers were in retreat along the road east of Bulwana; finally he saw that a gin had been raised over Long Tom of Bulwana, preparatory to removing that gun. He then gave Ladysmith the good news that 'the enemy were off at last.' Unfortunately, from our position south of Bulwana, we could not see what was taking place on the north side, as the mountain, a very high one, intervened.

In the meanwhile Dundonald's Brigade had pushed on and were occupying some kopjes preparatory to another forward move. Just then occurred an incident which may be worth relating. Captain Bottomley, commanding the squadron of Imperial Light Horse, came to Lord Dundonald and reminded him of a promise that if it were in his power to grant the request, his squadron should lead the advance on Ladysmith. This promise had been given months before in conversation, and as a tribute to the brave conduct of the Imperial Light Horse in Natal. Lord Dundonald complied at once, though, if he had not given his word, he would have again sent out Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry to act as the advance, a duty which that splendid regiment was well able to undertake, it being his invariable custom to keep the lead in the hands of one regiment for the whole day whenever possible. He therefore arranged with Captain Bottomley, of the Imperial Light Horse, to scout the

hill in front, if possible, with his men. Lord Dundonald then saw Major Gough, commanding the Composite Regiment, and, having told him what he had done, said that his regiment was to do the scouting for the brigade, the Imperial Light Horse and the Natal Carbineers forming the advanced squadrons. Having made these arrangements, the brigade was moved in an easterly direction in order to get on better ground, but, as shell-fire soon opened from the eastward side, he did not go further in that direction, having no guns with him, but changed his course again northward.

It appears that a Boer council of war had been held the night before, and that a general retreat to the Biggarsberg had been determined on by a majority. This decision was not unanimous; Louis Botha, Erasmus, and Lukas Meyer entreated the other Commandants to hold their ground. It appears that General Joubert, who was at Modder Spruit, north of Ladysmith, with 10,000 men, had been appealed to for reinforcements, and had refused to send any, notwithstanding that Botha's men had now been continuously fighting for weeks. After the Krijgsraad had decided to withdraw the remnants of the Boer forces south of Ladysmith, their departure was so rapid and their line of retreat so well concealed by Bulwana from the relieving force, that it was impossible for the British to be aware that a general retreat was in progress. The enemy had little trouble in removing what was left during the night of the 27th and dawn of the 28th; the bulk of their heavy transport and their laagers south of Bulwana had been broken up and removed in their first panic, after the capture of Monte Cristo and Hlangwane on February 20 and 24.

The Boer is quick at noting the proper time for

retreat, and, once he has made up his mind to effect this purpose, he is not slow in acting upon it. This has always been one of the chief characteristics of his tactics. There have, it is true, been one or two exceptions to this rule, namely, Elandslaagte and Bergendal; on both these occasions retreat was put off till too late, and the enemy suffered for their tardiness. At the same time it must be remembered that the bravest and best Boers always covered retrograde movements, and in such a country as Natal, with endless defensive positions, a pursuit, unless carried out with a force large enough to enable turning movements, would have been barren of any practical result.

I gather, from information given by prisoners and local residents at the time, that, although the Boer council of war decided on a general retirement, this resolve was not communicated to the burghers; nevertheless, they took their own initiative and retreated without orders in two main lines, one force, with half a dozen guns,* towards Van Reenan's Pass on the west, the other towards Glencoe on the north. Meyer and Botha are stated to have been the last to leave the positions they had defended so long, and they are said to have decided to return and renew the fight after having secured food for their men and horses at Modder Spruit. That this account is erroneous was afterwards proved from the state of their laager, where a large amount of food and fodder abandoned by them in their retreat was found by the Ladysmith garrison and eagerly consumed. When Botha and his force, we are told, arrived at Modder Spruit, they found that Joubert and his 10,000 men had fled north,

* This information I received from a local farmer, through whose yard the guns passed.

and had carried with them every ounce of sustenance. It was a bitter disappointment to the fugitives, but there was nothing to be done except to travel in the direction of the scent of food, and the journey led the dejected, disappointed, starved Generals and burghers north over the Biggarsberg Mountains, where provisions could be secured.

It has been suggested that the cavalry on the Bulwana side might have rushed the Boer rear-guard and captured their guns; but to anyone who has seen the ground over which such action would have had to be attempted, the reasons for its non-performance are obvious. The Boer line of retreat to the north, as may be traced on the map facing p. 199, was along a road over the Klip River and south-east of Bulwana. The river has a nasty, uneven bed, and is spanned only by a wooden foot-bridge. The road up the acclivity is very steep and rugged, and the base of the mountain itself is a network of dongas, very suitable for ambuscade.

While the cavalry were engaged with the enemy's rear-guard, the infantry were inactive, resting for the most part on the hills which had been captured the day before. In the Boer trenches many items of interest met our eyes. Thousands and thousands of rounds of the enemy's ammunition lay everywhere, abandoned in their flight. As it was believed that they had buried several of their guns, the troops occupied their time in closely searching the trenches, some of which had been filled in with earth by the fugitives in burying their dead before the arrival of our men. In one place, the soil being accidentally removed from two Boer graves with crosses and inscriptions while our men were digging fresh ones, many

thousand rounds of split-nosed and flat-nosed ammunition were discovered.

Evidence was also found of the presence of Boer women on the battlefield during the recent operations. This is said to be accounted for by the fact that some 400 women proceeded thither to join their husbands on Majuba Day. It has, however, been stated by newspaper correspondents with the Boers that during the fighting on the Tugela not only were several women present as spectators, but some actually took an active part in the fighting.

I will record two instances of this combative instinct which may be of interest. Both I heard from the Boers themselves. The first is of Mrs. Otto Krantz, wife of a professional hunter, who obtained the sanction of the Government to join a commando, and accompanied her husband in the field through nearly the whole of Natal. She was in the battle of Elandslaagte and in all the fighting along the Tugela, and afterwards went to the scene of action in the Free State. Another Boer woman, Mrs. Helena Herbst Wagner, of Zeerust, spent five months in the trenches. Her husband went on commando at the commencement of the war, leaving her at home with a baby. The child died in January, and the mother donned her husband's clothing, obtained a rifle and bandolier, and went off to join him. Failing to find him, she joined Commandant Ben Viljoen's forces, and went through Spion Kop, Vaal Krantz, and Pieter's Hill. Later she heard her husband lay wounded at Johannesburg Hospital, and she left the army temporarily to nurse him. That her husband recovered from his wound is borne out by the fact that many months afterwards I obtained at Pretoria a portrait of the happy pair

(both in male attire) armed with rifles and bandoliers.

It is unnecessary for me to criticise such a state of affairs as is here related; I am quite content to leave the reader to draw his own conclusions. I should, however, like to record that when Louis Botha became Commandant-General he strictly forbade all women visiting the laagers, and few, if any, took part in the engagements for some time thereafter.

When I arrived at the infantry bivouacs on Pieter's Hill about mid-day on my pony, I found the men still busy burying the dead. In one long trench alone on Barton's Hill a non-commissioned officer pointed out a heap of ninety-eight dead Boers, who were being searched for the identification cards supplied by the Red Cross Society. Dozens of Mauser rifles lay about, many of which had been smashed in order to render them useless. Close by I met the medical officer of the South African Light Horse—an Irishman, Major Keenan—and he asked me to accompany him towards Nelthorpe Station, which was only some three miles on, to see a wounded man. As we neared the spot, I noticed a Red Cross flag flying. Thinking it was one of our dressing-stations, I rode over, leaving Major Keenan to look after his case. The station was deserted; no sign of any medical occupant was left. On the floor, strewn about and also in boxes, lay quantities of little lumps of a dark, chocolate-coloured, waxy matter. I picked up a piece of this, and found on examination it was dynamite. I went out and closely examined the Red Cross flag; it was not a British one. Hauling it down, as it had no right to be flying, I re-entered the station and examined the place more closely than before for signs of any recent

medical inhabitants. Had a Boer doctor used it for a dressing-station, he must have left about the paper covering of his dressings or bits of the dressings themselves. None were to be found. It was truly a curious place for a Red Cross flag to be flying. I reported the presence of the dynamite to a Staff officer, who had a guard placed there to avoid accidents.

During the afternoon, Dr. Krieger, General Lukas Meyer's Staff Surgeon, came into our lines with several ambulance-waggons to take away the enemy's wounded. He, however, took only some twenty-seven of the less serious cases. As to this visit, Mr. Hillegas* relates:

'General Warren produced a Dum-Dum bullet which had been found on a dead Boer, and, showing it to Dr. Krieger, asked him why the Boers used a variety of cartridge which was not sanctioned by the rules of civilized warfare. Dr. Krieger took the cartridge in his hand, and, after examining it, returned it to Sir Charles, with the remark that it was a British Lee-Metford Dum-Dum. General Warren seemed to be greatly nonplussed when several of his officers confirmed the physician's statement, and informed him that a large stock of Dum-Dum cartridges had been acquired by the Boers at Dundee. It is an undeniable fact that the Boers captured thousands of rounds of Dum-Dum bullets which bore the broad arrow of the British Army, and used them in subsequent battles.'

From this statement Mr. Hillegas would wish us to believe that the Boers retained all the bullets captured at Dundee for use, and no others. The implication is too absurd in face of the fact that such bullets would not fit the Mauser rifle, though the missiles which inflicted the hideous lacerated wounds

* 'With the Boer Forces,' by H. C. Hillegas (Methuen).

found on many of our soldiers were fired from those guns. The contention, therefore, that the bullets were British and were fired from Boer rifles is an impudent attempt to explain away the case. The Dum-Dum bullets captured by the Boers after the evacuation of Dundee by the British were left in camp because their use had been prohibited by the British Commanding Officer. They had been brought there by the lately-arrived Indian contingent, and since then it had been clearly laid down in Army Orders to all troops disembarking in South Africa that no Dum-Dum bullets were to be landed, and none were.* While it was impossible for the Boers to use Dum-Dum bullets in their Mauser rifles, they used many varieties of expanding Mauser ammunition. Mr. Hillegas acknowledges: 'It was an easy matter, however, for the Boers to convert their ordinary Mauser ammunition cartridges into Dum-Dum by simply cutting off the point of the bullet, and this was occasionally done.'

Another writer from the Boer side, who was himself fighting with the enemy during the campaign, and calls himself an 'ex-Lieutenant of General de Villebois-Mareuil,' in a work entitled 'Ten Months in the Field with the Boers,' treating of the subject of expansive bullets, states that they were used by the Boers, and adds: 'The story that the Boers only used those they had captured from the English is quite inadmissible,

* Concerning the Dum-Dum bullet story I always hold that much confusion arose from the expansive bullets being called by the name of the factory. Every bullet made in Dum-Dum, whether before or after the condemnation of the expansive one, had Dum-Dum printed on the paper cover, and might easily be called a Dum-Dum bullet, though it were in reality no more expansive than an unadulterated Mauser.

for the Mauser rifles, which were used exclusively in the Transvaal, were largely provided with them. I will try to describe the patterns chiefly used: (1) Section in the nickel casing, leaving the extremity of the leaden bullet exposed; the lead, getting very hot, emerges partly from the casing, flattens at the slightest resistance, and expands. (2) Four longitudinal sections in the nickel casing allow the bullet to flatten at the moment of contact, and to exude the lead through the apertures.' Because of its importance, I have discussed this matter at some length; it has on several occasions been the subject of questions in the House of Commons. The horrible nature of the wounds caused by expanding bullets has been already sufficiently described.

It is now necessary to return to the doings of the cavalry, Dundonald's Brigade having just cleared the Boers out of their laager on the west or hilly side, Burn-Murdoch's Brigade being on Nelthorpe Plain in the Bulwana direction.

About 3 p.m. Lord Dundonald received a message to the effect that the Imperial Light Horse patrol which had been sent scouting to the front had got on the ridge. He at once pushed the leading regiment on to the hill, supporting with the whole brigade. By alternately seizing positions in front and supporting and still pushing on, a rapid advance was now made until the foot of the great flat-topped hill south of Intombi, some six miles from Ladysmith, was reached. When the brigade came up it was getting late. One regiment was short of food owing to the non-arrival of some supply-waggons; the path up the hill was rocky and so bad that the horses could only be led up in single file; moreover, as there had not been

time to scout thoroughly, it was doubtful how far the enemy were from both flanks. Lord Dundonald therefore made up his mind not to risk the whole brigade by taking it on, as in the event of disaster the army would practically lose all its mounted rifle regiments, so he determined to go on himself with the leading regiment, sending back with deep regret, to a position he had selected, the remainder of his splendid brigade of South African Light Horse and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, who had since early morning been fighting to get within reach of the wished-for goal, and had, as events turned out, seen the last shot fired. These arrangements took time, so it was some little while before Lord Dundonald and Major Birdwood, his Staff officer, Lieutenant Clowes, his A.D.C., Mr. Winston Churchill, and a few orderlies, commenced their six-mile gallop. As they turned the last ridge the corrugated-zinc roofs of the low-lying town of Ladysmith, surrounded by the evening fog rising from the intervening marshy plain, came in sight. A little further there fell upon the ear a British challenge from the pickets near Intombi Spruit of 'Halt! who goes there?' and at 6 p.m. on February 28 Ladysmith was relieved.

Those who took part in this memorable ride will never forget the scene that presented itself.

As the Neutral Camp of Intombi was passed, men who could hardly stand were supporting others almost as weak. All were cheering, and many eyes streaming with tears. One poor fellow, hardly realizing that the enemy had been really beaten, said, 'You are violating the neutrality of Intombi.' But on and on the relief force galloped, passing Indians and Kaffirs who were mad with joy, until at the outpost lines Lord Dundonald

stopped to send a message to Sir Redvers Buller of Ladysmith's relief. As the welcome news spread to the town a mighty cheer arose and travelled from regiment to regiment. There was a rush from all sides to the Klip River, which divides the flat from the town. At the drift over the river General Brocklehurst met Lord Dundonald, followed by a great concourse of hurrahing and cheering men; some were even crying, and in the twilight looked ghastly pale and thin.

In the meanwhile the advanced squadrons of Gough's Regiment of Natal Carbineers under Major Mackenzie and Imperial Light Horse under Captain Bottomley were filing into the town. General Sir George White, with his Staff, promptly left headquarters to meet the relieving force, whom he met in the principal thoroughfare. Women and children were seen weeping with excitement and gladness. As General White turned back with the party to headquarters, he received an ovation from the great gathering, which now filled the streets.

At the post-office the General stopped in response to the cheers, and endeavoured to address the crowd. Struggling with emotion aroused by the prevailing enthusiasm, he could hardly make himself heard. He concluded his short address to the townspeople with the words: 'I want heartily to thank you for the very great assistance you have given me during this trying time.' Three cheers were now given for General White, Lady White, General Hunter, the Staff, and the crew of the *Powerful*, causing a temporary interruption, and General White then continued: 'This is indeed a happy moment. I thank God our flag has been upheld.' Renewed enthusiasm greeted this

sentence, and cheers were raised, first for the Queen and then for the Prince of Wales. All then sang 'God save the Queen.' The General now called for cheers for Sir Redvers Buller. This was followed by prolonged cheering and the singing of 'He's a jolly good fellow.' Silence being obtained, Sir George White again spoke, saying: 'It has gone to the bottom of my heart to have to cut down your rations, but I promise I will not do it again.' This was responded to with laughter and cheers, amid which Sir George White and his Staff moved off to headquarters. The General then entertained Lord Dundonald and his Staff to dinner.

It appears that Lord Dundonald's entry came as a complete surprise to the garrison. It had been reported on the preceding night that rations would be reduced, and the reduction actually took effect from the following morning. This was regarded as an augury of further delay on the part of the relieving force, and caused a little despondency among the garrison; but it is always the darkest hour that precedes the dawn, for soon came the news by helio from General Buller of his decisive victory over the enemy, and the garrison stood to arms. Sir George White ordered a nominal roll of the number of men in the garrison fit to go out and fight to be supplied him by units, and the total was found to be very small. The desperate straits of the besieged can hardly be realized. An English clergyman who was in constant contact with the Boers states that the hill over which Dundonald's Brigade came had been evacuated by mistake, and that after we had passed into Ladysmith the Boers returned and held a council of war as to whether a final assault upon the town should be delivered during

the night, but it was resolved not to attempt it. Whether that be so or not is not clear, but it is certain the enemy were aware of the enfeebled state of the garrison.

From the Ladysmith balloon, Waggon Hill, and other eminences, the enemy were seen in full retreat on mule-waggons and other vehicles, and thousands of mounted Boers were seen travelling to the west towards Van Reenan's. The field-guns endeavoured to shell them, but the range was too far. Great activity was also visible on the east, especially on Bulwana, where the naval men through their glasses saw a huge 'gin' being erected over their old acquaintance, Long Tom. The object of this was manifest: the enemy were about to attempt to remove the gun, but the 'handy man' did his best to frustrate the design. Shell after shell was sent in rapid succession through the air by the latter, and one of the 4·7 guns which had been recently mounted on Cæsar's Camp joined in the exciting fray. There was no need now to spare the scanty ammunition, which had been running short, and every gun that could range any of the enemy strove to wipe out old scores. Bursting shells followed the careering Boers wherever moving figures could be seen in range. Many magnificent shots are on record. One specially true shell struck the emplacement of Long Tom right at the muzzle of the gun. When the dust and smoke had cleared away, the 'gin' was seen to have been knocked over. It was again set up, but another shell from a naval 12-pounder shattered it and the hopes of the enemy at the same time, for no further attempt was made during daylight to remove it. The Boers' heavy artillery took no part in the fray; Long

Tom, Silent Susan, and Weary Willie maintained a discreet silence, as their only chance of safety lay in flight. About 7.45 p.m., when Sir George White's outpost reports came in, he again heliographed to Sir Redvers Buller the gist of them, giving positions evacuated and positions still held by the enemy. When darkness fell a terrific thunderstorm raged over the town and surrounding hills; rain poured in torrents for hours during the inky blackness of the night, which was relieved only by incessant lightning and the flashes of what was now a desultory bombardment by the big naval guns. While Ladysmith had shelter for its troops, General Buller's force had to lie out in the open without tents, exposed to the full fury of the storm on Nelthorpe Plain. But the end had been achieved, and no one grumbled.

As Sir George White was not sure that the enemy had left all their positions round Ladysmith, he had during the night made careful inquiries among the regiments for a roll of the men capable of a five-miles march, with the possibility of a fight at the end. But so run down were the garrison from want of food that, though many volunteered, only 2,000 out of the entire garrison were considered fit. Colonel W. G. Knox, with selected men from the 1st Liverpools, 1st Devons, 2nd Gordons, 5th Dragoons, 19th Hussars, and the 53rd and 67th Batteries Royal Field Artillery, was ordered to move out along the Newcastle Road.

This small force of almost exhausted men and skeleton horses advanced first against Long Hill and Pepworth Hill, which they occupied without opposition; the cavalry then, having reconnoitred Limit Hill, sent back word for the artillery, who advanced and took up a position on the north-east slope, and shelled

several ox-waggons which were being urged northward. Major Abdy's Battery, the 53rd, then moved to a spur overlooking Modder Spruit Station, where the Boers were busy loading up some trains. Our artillery now opened fire on some kopjes in the direction of the railway-station, and on a large Boer camp in the vicinity, and the infantry, who were extended along the front of Pepworth and Long Hill, aided with a continuous rifle-fire. While this was going on, the enemy opened a heavy rifle-fire from Pepworth Hill, which completely enfiladed the whole force. Our infantry were too exhausted to capture this position, but the artillery turned their guns on the hill and subdued the fire. About this time a loud explosion was heard, following the departure of the last train from Modder Spruit Station. This train had stopped on the far side of the spruit. The bridge over the spruit was blown into the air, and the train, having waited until the man who had lighted the fuse was on board, steamed away north out of sight among the hills. Both men and horses were too weak for active pursuit; the former could hardly carry their rifles, and many of the animals fell dead from sheer exhaustion. After some desultory long-range fire, during which Colonel Pickwoad was shot through the thigh, the last Boer disappeared, and the column returned to Ladysmith. Our casualties were two officers and six men wounded. The gain was little beyond forcing the enemy to leave their camps behind with stores of food and ammunition. This excursion by the long-suffering garrison of Ladysmith is worthy of record, as an effort of courageous endurance on the part of men whose energies and strength had been well-nigh exhausted by long privation and hunger.

On the same morning—March 1—before the sun rose, Lord Dundonald mustered the force with which he had entered the town on the previous evening in order to rejoin his brigade, taking with him the Assistant-Adjutant-General of the Ladysmith force, Sir Henry Rawlinson, entrusted with a message to Sir Redvers Buller from Sir George White. A small party of Captain Bottomley's Imperial Light Horse also proceeded to scout Bulwana and look for Long Tom, which had been on the hill at sunset the previous evening. Two squadrons of Natal Carbineers under Colonel Royston also went some way with Dundonald until he branched off in a westerly direction to rejoin his brigade, which had received orders to cover the west or left flank, left front, and left rear of the army. Dundonald sent away towards Van Reenan's a few squadrons, which were able to effect some good in causing the enemy to abandon waggons, etc., but Sir Redvers Buller did not consider it advisable to give orders for a general pursuit of the enemy.

At the first streak of dawn, the still, black mass of Lombard's Kop, crowned with mist, was reached; Bulwana was at the time obscured by light, billowy clouds. As the day dawned these disappeared, and the Boer tents and shelters on the eastern and southern slopes of the mountain that had held Ladysmith in its toils for four months became visible. As no trace of the enemy was to be seen, and not a shot was fired, the party pushed on to the crest line, which was found to be unoccupied. Ladysmith could now at last enjoy the inspiriting sight of the Imperial Light Horse on the summit of the hill. The remains of a large Boer laager, fifty tents, quantities of gun and rifle ammunition, food, cigars and tobacco, and some livestock, were

AMBULANCES CROSSING THE KLIP RIVER INTO LADYSMITH.

Major Winter, R.A.M.C.

all the troops secured; the Boer guns had been removed, and nought remained of Long Tom save its platform and 'gin'; a fine telescope and a search-light must, however, be mentioned.

Some other small forces had pushed out from Ladysmith to the Boer camps seen at Bell's Farm and Surprise Hill to the north, and End Hill to the west, and met with similar results. No Boers, no guns, and nothing of importance to capture, save a few cattle, a little ammunition, and a certain amount of food-supplies. At Bester's Farm a small party of the Natal Police had a brush with the enemy, losing one of their men killed and another wounded.

Shortly after daylight I visited Intombi Hospital, which lay under Bulwana. I had put a few tins of tobacco and some eatables in the saddle-bags of my pony for distribution on arrival. The hospital was situated on the banks of the Klip River, and after a somewhat tedious passage through a network of dongas and thick, thorny mimosa-bush the white canvas of the tortoise-shaped tents came in view. As I was the first arrival of the relieving force in that pest-stricken camp, I got a very cordial reception from all sides. Notwithstanding the barren and grassless nature of the ground between the tents, I was struck by the remarkable cleanliness everywhere observable. After a conversation with the medical officers, with some of whom I had had previous personal acquaintance, I took a walk round the wards. There were about 800 patients; the features and limbs of one and all showed unmistakably what the ravages of disease and starvation will produce. Thin, gaunt, haggard men,—living skeletons—met my eyes everywhere, some in beds, others seated, others crawling rather than walking; listless, claw-

fingered beings in ragged hospital clothes, whose only signs of life seemed centred in their eyes—large, round, glistening eyes, set off by pinched, cadaverous, bearded faces. Such was Intombi. The medical staff themselves looked almost as bad: one of them, whom I had known as a stout, well-groomed man about town at home, had now a pale, emaciated face, his tattered khaki hanging in folds about a wasted frame; he appeared rather a subject for medical aid than one fit to administer it. He pointed out what seemed to me to be a small forest of short white stakes, glistening in the morning sun, between the hospital and Bulwana. I asked him what it was. 'It's the graves of 1,600 men,' he said, 'the victims of enteric, dysentery, and wounds.' I shuddered. My few pounds of tobacco and other things did not go far, they were as a drop in the ocean; still, a few got a pipeful. I saw thrifty men mixing the tobacco with pinches of cut grass or leaves, to stretch their smoke.

As I was anxious to get on to have a look at the town itself, I mounted my pony and made off. A gallop over some two miles of flat plain, and I forded the Klip River and was in Ladysmith—at last. Again the barren nature of the ground impressed me—dry, hard, caked clay, no grass, no herbage, the few trees and bushes covered with red dust, hiding the verdure of their leaves. Squalid, dusty streets, barricaded houses with broken windows, shops with shutters up; one with a signboard, 'Luncheons and Dinners at any Hour,' seemed rather a mockery in a besieged town. Any of my readers who have seen a sea-swept rock, barren of vegetation, the home only of sea-birds, and covered with their offal, will find a simile to Ladysmith after its four months' siege. Many of the

buildings were absolutely empty; some showed signs of shell damage; here a large hole in the masonry, there a corrugated-zinc roof, with the sun shining through many small round holes, each the size of a florin, produced by shrapnel. The clock-tower of the town-hall showed a large gap in its side, just as if some monster had taken a bite out of it—so one did, Long Tom of Bulwana—for the clock was gone. Other strange and weird sights met my eye everywhere, even on this my first visit—for example, the strange underground shelters in the banks of the Klip River, where the race again became dwellers in caves, tunnelled out in rabbit fashion. The very inhabitants seem strange; talk to a man, and he edges round; he does not like to turn his back on Bulwana; it has been his wont for a good while back to keep an open eye on this unwelcome landmark; he expects to see that white column of smoke rise, which is to him as the cry 'Footsack!'* is to the Boer dog.

I heard on arrival that General Buller was expected in the afternoon, and that an escort of mounted troops had been sent out to meet him. These failed, however, in their object, as he did not come by the expected route, but took Intombi's Hospital on his way before visiting the town. The care of his troops, especially the comfort of his sick and wounded, had ever been a characteristic of General Buller in this campaign. He entered the lately-besieged town about twelve o'clock, accompanied by a small personal escort. Some of his cavalry, who had come by the main-road, had distracted the attention of the garrison and civil inhabitants then lining the streets, and the General's arrival was not expected so soon. News

* Taal for 'Clear out!'

of it, however, soon spread, and General White and his Staff went out to receive him. The meeting was most cordial, the people contributing by the warmth of their enthusiasm, cheering him all along the route to the convent, where he had an interview with General White. One hour after his entry into Ladysmith the war correspondents of the public press were able to telegraph home from Ladysmith (viâ helio on Bulwana) a full account of the proceedings, thus showing how smartly our Telegraph Department had laid their wires. The first message to be sent was to Her late Majesty the Queen, announcing the relief of the town. Her Majesty sent the following reply to Sir Redvers Buller:

'Thank God for news you have telegraphed to me; congratulate you and all under you with all my heart.—V.R.I.'

On March 3 General Buller published the following address to the Natal Field Force in Army Orders:

'SOLDIERS OF NATAL,

'The relief of Ladysmith unites two forces, both of which have, during the last four months, striven with conspicuous gallantry and splendid determination to maintain the honour of their Queen and country.

'The garrison of Ladysmith have during four months held their position against every attack with complete success, and endured many privations with admirable fortitude.

'The relieving force has had to force its way through an unknown country across an unfordable river and over almost inaccessible heights, in the face of a fully prepared, well-armed, and tenacious enemy. By the exhibition of the truest courage, the courage which burns steadily as well as flashes brilliantly, it has accomplished its object and added a glorious page to the history of the British Empire.

'Ladysmith has been relieved. Sailors* and soldiers, colonials and homebreds, have done this, united by the one desire, inspired by one patriotism.

'The G.O.C. congratulates both forces on the martial qualities which they have shown; he thanks them for their determined efforts, and desires to offer his sincere sympathy to the relations and friends of those good soldiers and gallant comrades who have fallen in the fight.

(Signed) 'REDVERS BULLER,
'General.'

* The strength of the Naval Brigade under Captain Jones, R.N., was 39 officers and 403 men of the Royal Navy, and 2 officers and 50 men of the Natal Naval Volunteers. Their guns included one 6-inch, two 4·7's on travelling carriages, two 4·7's on platform mountings, one 4·7 on a railway truck, and eighteen 12-pounders on travelling carriages. During the relief operations the 4·7's fired 4,000, and the twelve-pounders 12,900 rounds of ammunition.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF LAING'S NEK

The medical relief of Ladysmith—General Buller's advance through Northern Natal—The clearing of the Biggarsberg—The engagement of Helpmakaar—Laing's Nek—Botha's Pass—The advance through the Orange Free State—Battle of Alleman's Nek—The advance into the Transvaal.

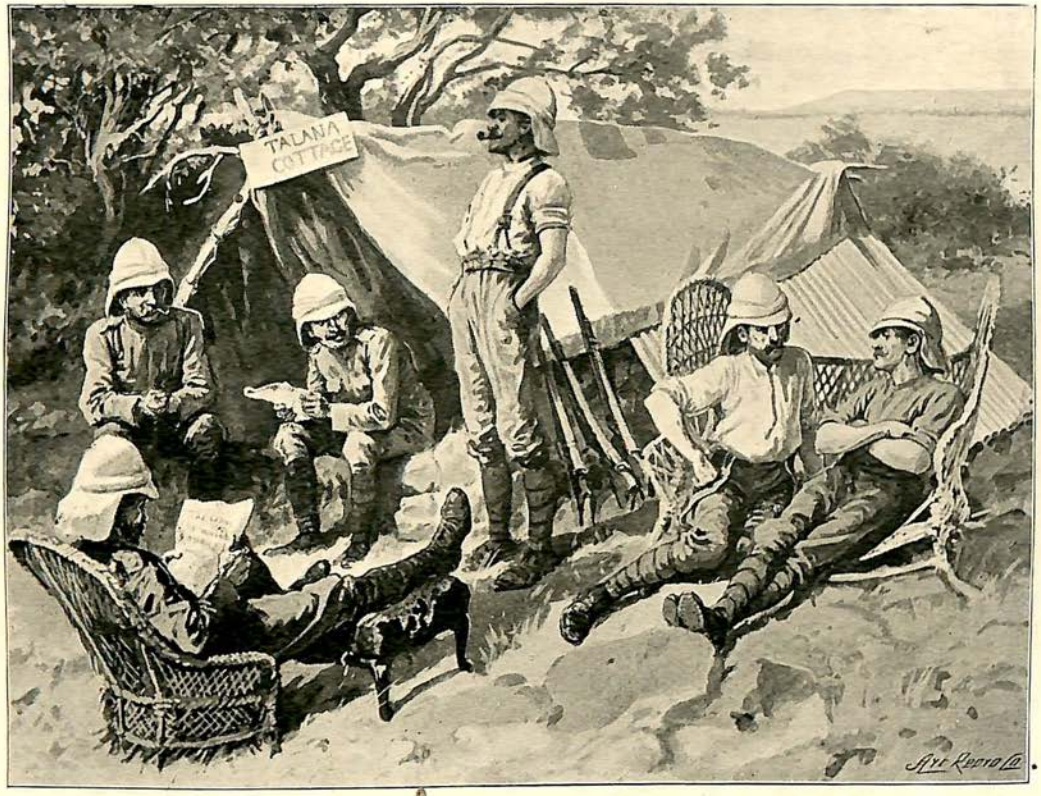
A BRIEF summary of the problem the Royal Army Medical Corps had to face during and after the final operations for the relief of Ladysmith may be of interest. During the fourteen days' fighting prior to the relief the evacuation of General Buller's field hospitals was much simplified by their proximity to the railway; all cases, however, had to be carried by hand to railhead, which, owing to the destruction of the Colenso bridges, commenced at the southern side of the Tugela. These cases, after crossing the river by pontoon or ferry boats, were placed in ambulance trains, two of which were running in Natal up to the relief, one being under Major Brazier Creagh, R.A.M.C., and another under Captain Leuman, I.M.S. Both had accommodation for about seventy-two lying-down cases; a third train, 'Princess Christian,' under Lieutenant-Colonel Forrester, R.A.M.C., arrived in March, having accommodation for ninety

lying-down cases. Before we entered Ladysmith, there were 4,500 patients in General Buller's hospitals, a number which strained their accommodation to the utmost. In Ladysmith there were 2,000 patients, and at least another 2,000 who should have been in hospital.

Owing to the exposure and insanitary conditions of the Tugela valley, polluted as it was by dead animals and Boer offal, an epidemic of sickness was also anticipated among the relieving troops. As it was manifestly impossible from a sanitary point of view to use any of the Ladysmith hospitals or pitch new ones in the vicinity of that town, otherwise than provisionally, the medical problem became complex and beset with difficulties. In order to meet the strain, the line of communication hospitals were evacuated to ships at Durban. A splendid fleet of six hospital ships—*Lismore Castle*, *Nubia*, *Orcana*, *Avoca*, *Dunera*, *Simla*—with an average capacity for 30 officers and 240 men, existed, and a fortnightly service to England was from this time initiated. In addition to this fleet, the *Princess of Wales* and *Maine*, and the private yachts of Sir Samuel Scott and Mr. Jesse Coope, were of great assistance, and as pressure increased sufficient transports were fitted up to enable the maintenance of a weekly service to England. A large convalescent depot was established at Mooi River, with accommodation for 50 officers and 1,500 men, this being midway between the base hospitals at Maritzburg, with an accommodation of such elasticity as to bear almost any strain, under Colonel Johnston, R.A.M.C., and the stationary hospitals at Estcourt and Chieveley, the latter under Major Kirkpatrick, R.A.M.C., each with 920 beds. In 'Tin Town' camp outside Ladysmith, a general hospital of 1,000 beds was speedily

improvised under Major Westcott, R.A.M.C., and from Colenso a stationary hospital under Major F. A. B. Daly, R.A.M.C., was moved to Modder Spruit. Thus, by the careful organization of 7,000 beds on the lines of communication, and a number of mobile field hospitals with the troops, the medical relief of Ladysmith was carried out by a master hand without a hitch, and what might have resulted in an epidemic of enteric was avoided. It is not to be denied that the strain on the already undermanned R.A.M.C. staff was at times so severe that it was on the verge of collapse; but one and all worked in harmony, and with cooperation union gave strength; besides, General Buller backed us in all things; he gave us a 'free hand': that was all we wanted; we did the rest.

On March 3 General Buller received from Lord Roberts orders for the Natal Field Force to remain in the vicinity of Ladysmith, and to act strictly on the defensive; accordingly, this force was spread out over a large area within the following positions: Tugela River, Sunday's River, Elandslaagte, Smith's Crossing, Acton Homes, and the line of railway communication South. Except for a few affairs of outposts, the force remained inactive, but the rest was much needed, the entire army having an opportunity to refit, not only in clothes, but also in boots, which were much needed. During this period the enemy, having recovered their shattered morale in their mountain fastnesses of the Drakensberg and Biggarsberg, began to look about for fresh positions to entrench, and by the middle of March it was calculated that they had collected to the number of 12,000 in a heavily entrenched position on the Biggarsberg. Owing to Lord Roberts' advance on the Free State capital, this force gradually decreased.



'TOMMY' IN A BOER CAMP OUTSIDE LADYSMITH.

From the *Graphic*, by E. BLAKE KNOX.

The Second Division under Lyttelton and the Fifth Division under Warren, along with the Naval Brigade, Dundonald's Mounted Brigade, and Dartnell's Natal Volunteer Brigade (Natal Carbineers, Umvoti Mounted Rifles, Border Mounted Rifles) had their fancied security rudely disturbed in camp at Elandslaagte at 7.45 a.m. on April 10 by the Boers opening fire from four different positions. The first couple of dozen shells fell among the tents of the 2nd Devons and 2nd West Yorks in Hildyard's Brigade. At this hour the majority of the troops were at drill and manœuvre on the plain in front of the camp; back they came; tents were rapidly struck, and the men were moved to broken ground for cover. The Naval Brigade had quickly located the enemy's guns, and a few minutes after the first shell was thrown into camp were busy replying with their 4·7 and 12-pounder guns. Their shooting was excellent, and the Boer fire quickly lessened; they silenced altogether the closest and most annoying gun of the enemy, which did not trouble us again during the day.

On May 2 General Buller received orders to occupy the enemy's attention on the Biggarsberg. A few days' delay was, however, necessary to collect the transport oxen, which, owing to difficulties with lung sickness, and want of grass and water, had been sent south of Ennersdale. On May 7 the army commenced its advance from Ladysmith, and partly to deceive the enemy, partly to meet a threatened attack on our right, a feint towards Elandslaagte was first made.

The column, however, changed direction on May 9, and on the evening of the next day the Sunday's River Drift, on the Ladysmith-Helpmakaar Road,

was reached. At this place the following force was concentrated:

Cavalry under Lord Dundonald (Dundonald's Mounted Brigade and Dartnell's Natal Volunteer Brigade).
A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery.
Second Infantry Division (complete), with Divisional Cavalry.
Two 4·7 guns, No. 6 Company
Four 12-pounder quick-firing guns, No. 2 Company
} Western Division Royal Garrison Artillery.
61st Howitzer Battery Royal Field Artillery.
Three Vickers-Maxims (pom-poms).
Supply Column, with ten days' supply.

On May 11 the force marched due east to Waschbank River, where it came into contact with small parties of the enemy. Owing to the extremely mountainous nature of the country, it took twenty-two hours' continuous marching for the entire force to cover the nine miles between Sunday's River Drift and Waschbank River. On this day General Hildyard, who had replaced General Warren in command of the Fifth Division, moved out a mixed body of troops of his command from Elandslaagte to Indodo Mountain, partly for the purpose of constructing a road, and partly to cover the left flank of the main advance.

On the 12th General Buller's force advanced in a south-easterly direction to Vermaak's Kraal, which was reached by a diversion from the main-road, this being necessary in order to avoid coming under fire from the enemy's guns on the high ridges of the Biggarsberg, which lay parallel to the line of march. The whole of the supply park was left at Waschbank, as well as two field-guns (Royal Field Artillery), two quick-firing 12-pounders (Royal Garrison Artillery), and a detachment of the Third Mounted Brigade.

At Vermaak's Kraal the main force bivouacked within

7,300 yards of the Biggarsberg, which here rises almost perpendicularly from the lower country, except where the road goes up Britte's Pass. As there was absolutely no water at the bivouac, the oxen and horses had to be sent three miles farther, to Vermaak's Platz. During the afternoon the enemy were seen mounting a gun on the top of the spur nearest the bivouac, and, in addition to the unpleasant nature of the camp, there seemed every prospect of its being bombarded from the mountain-tops at any moment. To protect the bivouac, two 4·7 guns were mounted in epaulments facing the enemy's gun.

At daylight on the 13th the troops resumed their march in a more easterly direction, away from the line of the enemy's guns, two of which opened fire at 8 a.m. on the tail of the column, wounding slightly two men of the Durhams; our long-range guns, under Major Talbot, R.A., silenced them by the fifth round, and, as was afterwards ascertained, badly damaged one. The enemy made no further resistance for a time. The hills flanking Britte's Pass were now reconnoitred, and being reported clear, an advance was made up the road by the mounted troops, while the baggage and supply columns were parked at the entrance to the defile under a guard of one battalion, one battery Royal Field Artillery, and the two divisional squadrons of cavalry. The army was now opposite the left flank of the enemy's position, under Uithoek Mountain, a lofty bastion of the south-west end of the Biggarsberg, which commands the Helpmakaar plateau, from which it is separated by a narrow Nek. This mountain is almost unclimbable, but on Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry scrambling up the Boers were forced to retire.

Sir Redvers Buller now ordered General Hamilton, with three battalions of the Second Brigade, to scale the heights, and to assault the south-west crest of the main plateau. Simultaneously with this infantry assault some other bodies of troops were set in motion against the plateau from other directions, and, owing to the nicety of co-operation, the main object aimed at—the turning of the Biggarsberg—was achieved.

For some weeks past Colonel Bethune had been holding Greytown and the line of the Tugela; his command had been directed to go forward from these positions concurrently with the main advance on Vermaak's Kraal, and Dundonald's cavalry joined hands with Bethune about twelve o'clock on this day. During the night before Colonel Bethune had seized with his left the hills that commanded the southern sides of the pass, up which General Buller's force had to advance. On these hills Lieutenant Tandy's two 12-pounders were mounted. At 11.20 a.m. the main attack was delivered as follows: General Buller, with the Fourth Infantry Brigade and Corps Artillery, advanced up the pass, and Lord Dundonald's Brigade seized each successive hill-top. Colonel Bethune advanced at the same time by the Pomeroy Road, whilst the Second Infantry Brigade attacked the plateau from the Nek of Uithoek Hill. The enemy, who were in force on the plateau, seeing the converging columns, and afraid of having their retreat cut off, made little stand; their extended line of long-built entrenchments was rushed by the South African Light Horse, and by 2 p.m. the edge of the difficult Helpmakaar defile was ours. Commandant Ben Viljoen, who led the Boers, did not retire a moment too soon; had he waited to engage Bethune's force, General Buller would have caught

him on his flank, and *vice versâ*. The enemy now retired to the high hills immediately in front of Helpmakaar village, and took up another position. Dundonald's Brigade rapidly pushed on against this. When the summit of Britte's Pass was reached, Boers were seen galloping in all directions; this was particularly noticeable in the village of Helpmakaar, about 4,000 yards away: here there seemed to be great confusion and excitement. 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, which was with Dundonald's Brigade, now received orders to push forward; it came into action in front of a line of wood, and was for some time under a very nasty enfilade fire from a pom-pom, which was so well concealed that it could not be located. The remainder of our artillery having arrived, the enemy's position was shelled from both flanks, and the front by Lieutenant-Colonel Paget's Brigade Division Royal Field Artillery, two 12-pounders under Major Curtis, R.A., and two similar guns under Lieutenant Tandy, R.G.A., with Bethune's force behind cover of a crest to the south. Our artillery practice was very good, and we heard afterwards that two of the enemy's guns had been damaged. No further attack was made that day, and, owing to the want of water on the spot, the bulk of the troops had to bivouac at the bottom of the pass, detachments being left above to hold the plateau.

Some hours before daylight on the next day (May 14th) the mounted troops left their bivouacs, forming up behind the wood on the top of the hill. It was a question whether there would be an infantry engagement to take the enemy's second position, or, should he have left it, a cavalry pursuit. At daylight our scouts reported that the Boers had 'cleared,' and

Dundonald's Brigade was at once ordered to pursue. Why the enemy ever evacuated this position with such little resistance, which was an extremely strong one, and on which they had constructed really fine defence works, is hard to tell; but they rarely did anything of this kind without good reason, and it is probable that the commencement of an advance of a force up the railway-line, though its progress was slow, was most certainly causing the enemy concern as to his line of communication.

On swept Lord Dundonald's cavalry through Helpmakaar village, and on, on, on, deploying into a broad front of regiments preceded by scouts. At length the rattle of the Mauser showed that the enemy was caught up. Without a moment's delay squadrons of Thorneycroft's Regiment, or Byng's South African Light Horse, or Gough's Regular Mounted Infantry, or Natal Volunteers, were galloping round their flanks and pouring volleys into the hostile forces. At one stand alone dear old Tommy Atkins of Gough's Regulars let them have about seventy rounds a man. The enemy were caught up at Zwart Kop, at Spion Kop, and at Blesboklaagte. At Spion Kop the Chestnut Troop* came into action, a good fight seemed imminent, and Colonel Parsons, C.R.A., sent for another battery from the infantry division, which was miles behind. As the 7th Battery Royal Field Artillery bore in sight after a splendid gallop, the Boer made up his mind not to stand: away he went, and our cavalry pushed on again. The real excitement of the day now began, for the cavalry again

* 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery obtained this name from the colour of its horses as far back as the Peninsular War, and has retained it ever since.

took up the scent and started the pursuit in earnest at a gallop. The weather was warm, and the enemy set fire to the dry veldt grass on both sides of the road over a great breadth of country.

A pursuit such as was now being carried on was glorious in its danger and excitement. From high ground here and there could be seen masses of horsemen, with our men hot on their heels; then the Boers tried to stem the torrent once more, but in vain, for their flanks were soon turned. Our horsemen strained every nerve, for the word was passed from General to Colonels, and Colonels to officers and men, 'Get on, fire away, don't rest or stop, but ride on, on, on!' Then the Boers tried a ruse. They had hitherto made their stand on rocky kopjes easily discernible; this time they stood on the flat under cover of the smoke, letting our men get close to them, and then pouring in a volley. Luckily, the smoke obscured their view; only a few men and horses were hit. 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, which was near by, had its Sergeant-Major hit, and one or two horses, but came into action 'action front' and saved the situation. A few of the enemy's horses were shot, and a few prisoners taken in consequence, and on again swept the cavalry through flame and smoke, the charred veldt grass blowing into the men's faces, filling their eyes, mouths, and nostrils, singeing the legs of the horses and the hair of the men, and giving the brigade the appearance of an army of demons. Six miles from Dundee the enemy took up another strong position on the further side of a deep ravine, from the other side of which their artillery came into action with a wild fire, which became wilder still when they saw the irregulars and Natal Volunteers creeping round the flanks.

It was now getting late, and Lord Dundonald had received orders to pursue no further than this point, as the enemy's transport had been sent to the rear on the 12th; but, late as it was, a portion of the cavalry got to the other side of the defile that evening, and its patrols were in Dundee the following morning at daybreak. It was in describing this pursuit that Sir Redvers Buller wired home a despatch to England saying: 'Dundonald's Cavalry pursued the enemy through fire and smoke for 40 miles in a waterless country. I consider his pursuit a very fine performance.' There is no doubt whatever that this excellent piece of work turned the Boer retreat into a rout and saved Dundee from being sacked and looted, as all the Boers now thought of was to get to the other side of Laing's Nek. How many of them were killed none will ever know; according to custom, they took nearly all their dead along with them. As a spectacle no one will ever forget this memorable day, the whole veldt blazing, and rolling clouds of smoke covering the country for miles and miles—the double rattle of the Mauser and the answering storm from the British rifles as now and anon a regiment gets the range of Brother Boer, who, coming into loyal Natal at a walk to loot and pillage and wreck, and drive the British into the sea, was now leaving at a gallop bit by bit—the once boastful commandos losing their cohesion as our cavalry drove them out of British territory, with a dash and a rush that left no time to get orders, no time to be rallied, and no time even for thought. The cavalry fell back three miles for water and bivouac, and early the following morning—May 15—the whole force entered Dundee, and the right of the Fifth Division advanced to Waschbank.

Orders were sent to the Fifth Division at Indodo Mountain to occupy Wessel's Nek, and to the supply park at Waschbank to march at once to Beith by Van Tonder's Pass, which was the main-road from Waschbank to Dundee, and along which the enemy had expected General Buller to advance north; and in anticipation of this they had fortified it strongly. This road, the historic one along which General Yule's army passed in its retreat from Dundee to Ladysmith on October 21, 1899, passes through a frightful gorge, each side of which was heavily entrenched with sangars and gun emplacements. Now that General Buller had turned the Biggarsberg position, it had to be evacuated by the Boers.

On May 16 the cavalry occupied Danhauser and Glencoe, and the supply columns, which had refilled at Beith from the supply park, rejoined the main column.

The enemy having completely evacuated the Biggarsberg, General Buller's main force marched next day to Danhauser, where they bivouacked.

At 2 a.m., in the dark of the morning of the 18th, Dundonald marched on Newcastle, followed by the infantry. The post was occupied without opposition at mid-day, and the Union Jack again hoisted, to be hauled down no more.

The cavalry left Newcastle at dawn the following morning (19th) for Laing's Nek, twenty-five miles distant. At Ingogo some waggons, prisoners, and rifles were captured. As the prisoners stated that some of the Boer transport was only an hour ahead, and encountered difficulties in getting up Laing's Nek, Lord Dundonald pushed on. At the foot of Majuba the cavalry came into action with the enemy; and though Laing's Nek was heavily entrenched, as

was also Majuba Mountain on the west of the road, and Pougwane Mountain on the east, the enemy having constructed a huge gun emplacement on the latter hill, clearly visible to the naked eye, and said to contain a huge 12-inch Creusot, Lord Dundonald could not resist the temptation of galloping a portion of the Chestnut Troop close to Majuba and the Nek, thus giving this splendid battery the honour of firing the first British shells heard there since the disastrous year of 1881. It did one's heart good to see our shells going over the Nek and on to the slopes of Majuba, wherever Boers showed on the sky-line. After about three hours' desultory rifle-fire from both sides, which failed to draw any artillery response from the enemy, Dundonald determined to proceed to his bivouac on the north bank of the Ingogo, his instructions being not to advance on the Nek if it were strongly held. As our guns limbered up to retire, the enemy galloped forward in numbers along the ravines of the Buffalo on the east, and down the kloofs of Majuba on the west, trying to cut them off, only to receive the rifle-fire of Gough's Regiment, with Major Mackenzie's Natal Carbineers on one side and the South African Light Horse on the other, who were lying hidden and biding their opportunity. Accordingly the guns were quietly taken away to the music of the Lee-Metfords saying, 'So far, Friend Boer, but no further.' It was well Dundonald had provided for this retirement, for the enemy opened a very hot fire, and it afterwards transpired that some 5,000 Boers were lying in ambush on both these flanks, and were waiting their time until our brigade had ascended Laing's Nek to surround them, in which case nothing could have saved us from annihilation! Before dark

the Fourth Infantry Brigade arrived at Ingogo River, where they bivouacked. Thus it had come to pass that after ten days' operations the British flag once again fluttered over the whole of Northern Natal, as far north as Laing's Nek.

General Buller's turning movement of the Biggarsberg had been a complete success; the invader had been driven back, but his flight being so rapid, he suffered but little loss. The moral effect of the British advance was, however, tremendous, as many of the Natal rebels returned to their allegiance, and, what was also a new era to the Natal Army, the victory was an almost bloodless one on our side. It was now found necessary for the army to halt for some days to allow of the railway from Elandslaagte to be repaired, as it had been badly damaged in many places by the enemy, more especially about Glencoe. Our provisions, being exhausted, had to be renewed; and until the line was repaired this was tedious and heavy work, for every form of supplies had to be brought up in waggons.

During the next few days the army halted, and the enemy concentrated to the number of some 8,000 on the Transvaal frontier with about thirteen to fifteen guns in well-selected positions, while some 6,000 Free Staters were on the north-east corner of the Free State, of whom at least 3,000 were holding Botha's Pass and its vicinity. Thus the Boer Army held an almost impregnable position, stretching from Pougwane Mountain on the east, across Laing's Nek to Majuba, which formed the centre, and from Majuba south-westwards to Quagga's Nek in the Drakensberg, and from this following the Drakensberg chain well to the south of Botha's Pass. The total length of the

Boer position was over forty miles, but seeing that it was absolutely impossible to transport from the Natal side, except where three roads left that colony—Laing's Nek, Quagga's Nek, and Botha's Pass—the enemy again had the advantage of us, as from the heights of their crescentic position, in some parts 6,900 feet, they could note our road of approach, and concentrate at any point with rapidity. A turning movement from the east by General Buller was useless, if not impossible, as the country east of Pougwane is without roads, broken, and bush-covered; a frontal attack on Laing's Nek, even supported by artillery, would mean a casualty list of at least 3,000 men, and a turning movement to the west could only be effected through Quagga's Nek or Botha's Pass, from both of which it could be altered again into a frontal attack. To outwit Brother Boer, General Buller decided to divert his attention, and to do this more especially from the flank which he meant to strike. We shall see how this plan succeeded.

On May 28, the railway being repaired up to Newcastle, and a reserve of twenty-one days' supply of food for the force having been collected, General Buller played his first card. General Hildyard was sent with a strong force from Newcastle across the Buffalo at Wool's Drift towards Utrecht, a Transvaal town near the eastern frontier of Natal, and on the enemy's left flank. Another force under General Lyttelton was sent north-east to Dornberg, where the enemy had formed a strong laager. The main army in the meanwhile held their old positions at Ingogo and Inkwelo, and our artillery on the latter hill engaged the Creusot posted on Pougwane almost daily in an artillery duel. To the enemy on the hills

one of two movements seemed about to be made—either a frontal attack on Laing's Nek under cover of a feint from the east, or a turning movement from the east, to neither of which would they have objected. The Dornberg was evacuated by the enemy on General Lyttelton crossing the Buffalo, and he then turned north and came up on the left flank of General Hildyard, who had occupied the town of Utrecht without opposition. This being the first town in the Transvaal occupied by the Natal Field Force, the following proclamation was posted:

'PROCLAMATION.

'The troops of Queen Victoria are now passing through the Transvaal. Her Majesty does not make war on individuals, but is, on the contrary, anxious to spare them, as far as may be possible, the horrors of war. The quarrel England has is with the Government, not with the people of the Transvaal.

'Provided they remain neutral, no attempt will be made to interfere with persons living near the line of march; every possible protection will be given them, and any of their property that it may be necessary to take will be paid for. But, on the other hand, those who are thus allowed to remain near the line of march must respect and maintain their neutrality; and the residents of any locality will be held responsible, both in their persons and their property, if any damage is done to railway or telegraph, or any violence done to any member of the British forces in the vicinity of their homes.'

On May 30 General Buller, hearing that Lord Roberts had occupied Elandsfontein Junction, sent a flag of truce to the Commandant at Laing's Nek to ask him, now that his communications were cut, whether his struggle was worth continuing. The Commandant (Botha) replied that he would refer the question to his General.

On June 2 General Buller and Assistant-Commandant-

General Christian Botha (brother of Louis Botha) met under the shadows of Majuba. General Buller offered the following terms to the Boers, viz., that their homes should be unmolested provided they dispersed, leaving their artillery where it stood, but that they might take their smaller arms with them. Commandant Edwards (Botha's Chief of Staff) said that the Transvaal Government would have to be informed of this proposal. Consequently, an armistice was agreed upon up to the evening of June 5, on which day Botha wrote declining General Buller's terms. On the evening of this day General Hildyard, marching rapidly from Utrecht, bivouacked at De Wet's Farm, which lies beside the Newcastle-Laing's Nek Road, where the road to Botha's Pass branches off to the west. Under cover of darkness this force moved unobserved towards Botha's Pass, and on June 6 General Hildyard occupied Van Wyk's height, south of the road leading to the pass, with the South African Light Horse, the 13th Battery Royal Field Artillery, and the 2nd Middlesex Regiment, the whole under General Coke. Later in the day the enemy, being reinforced, made a stubborn attempt to retake this hill, firing the grass in all directions, and attacking under cover of the smoke; the S.A.L.H., however, held their ground with the loss of one killed and nine wounded.

During the night the two remaining battalions of the Tenth Brigade, two 4·7 guns, and two long-range 12-pounders, were sent to reinforce General Coke. Captain Jones, R.N., states that the mounting of the naval guns on Van Wyk's Hill was the toughest job he had through the whole campaign.

To support General Coke's right flank, two 4·7 guns and two 12-pounders, Royal Garrison Artillery, with

one battalion of the Eleventh Brigade, took up a position about a mile to the west of the Botha's Pass and Newcastle cross-roads. Two 5-inch guns, Royal Garrison Artillery, were moved preparatory to placing them on the south-west spur of Inkweloane Mountain. The following troops had been concentrated by this time in the vicinity of Van Wyk's Hill:

Second Cavalry Brigade (Colonel Brocklehurst).
South African Light Horse.
Eleventh Brigade (Major-General Wynne).
13th and 16th Batteries Royal Field Artillery.
Two 4·7 guns Royal Garrison Artillery.
Two 12-pounders Royal Garrison Artillery.
Divisional troops Fifth Division.
Divisional headquarters Fifth Division.

Orders were issued for the Second Infantry Brigade (Colonel Hamilton), with the 7th and 64th Batteries Royal Field Artillery, the 61st Howitzer Battery, and two pom-poms, under Lieutenant-Colonel Paget as Divisional Commander, to join the Fifth Division the next day (8th), and for the Brigade under Dundonald, with 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, to march at the same time from Ingogo Drift to Spitz Kop. Both these forces were to be under General Hildyard's orders.

At daylight on June 8 General Hildyard assembled his Brigadiers and artillery commanders on Van Wyk, and explained his plan of action for the assault of Botha's Pass. About five miles from the summit of the pass the Ingogo River runs in a gorge between Van Wyk and Spitz Kop, and through this gorge the road lies in a deep cutting. The South African Light Horse were to occupy Spitz Kop and clear the way for the infantry, who were to debouch from the gorge

and deploy in the more open ground between Van Wyk and the Drakensberg. A well-marked track down the berg, due west of Spitz Kop, was to be the dividing line between the attacks of the Second and Eleventh Brigades. About 10 a.m. the South African Light Horse occupied Spitz Kop without opposition, and on the infantry coming up they crossed their front as a screen and covered the left of the advance. About 10.45 a.m. the Eleventh Brigade advanced, covered by the fire of our artillery, whose position at this time was as follows: 11th and 69th Batteries Royal Field Artillery and two naval 12-pounders on Van Wyk; two 5-inch Royal Garrison Artillery on the spur of Inkweloane; two long-range 12-pounders on a spur of Inkwelo, under Captain Davidson, R.A.; the 63rd Battery Royal Field Artillery on Mount Prospect; the 7th, 61st and 64th Batteries Royal Field Artillery and two pom-poms advanced with the infantry of the Second Brigade. After extending, the Second and Eleventh Brigades advanced, and made rapid progress up the very steep hills flanking the pass. Simultaneously Lord Dundonald's Third Mounted Brigade advanced from Ingogo Drift over an extremely rough piece of ground against the summits of Inkweloane. So rapid and so resolute was the advance of the infantry, that before the enemy seemed to realize what was in progress our troops were in possession of the whole of the lower crest line of the Drakensberg from Inkweloane to Botha's Pass. But few casualties occurred on our side, this being due to the fact that the Boers were seen scampering in all directions to get cover, being quite unable to face our artillery fire on this exposed crest of the mountain range. Once the Second and Eleventh Brigades reached the crest,

they were subjected to a considerable amount of rifle, shell, and pom-pom fire, but this, being inaccurate and evidently hurried, did but little damage. The Second Brigade suffered a temporary check, as they found themselves faced by heavy entrenchments on the south-west of Inkweloane, from which place a pom-pom was actively firing. Lieutenant-Colonel Paget was unable to bring any of his field-guns up in support, owing to the steepness of the ascent, but he got a pom-pom dragged up by 100 men of the Devons. This gun immediately coming into action, and supported by an advance company of the Eleventh Brigade on the left of the pass, which enfiladed these entrenchments, drove the enemy out of them for a while; but under cover of a grass fire, which forced our men back, the Boers reoccupied them for a short time, and thus covered the retirement of their guns and waggons. Meanwhile, Lord Dundonald's Brigade had reached the crest of Inkweloane; this mountain being extremely steep, the infantry had to advance for a time without their artillery, and the enemy noting this brought out a pom-pom in the open on the summit of the hill, which was a tableland, and opened fire at its extreme range, thus being safe from our riflemen. Such a display sorely tempted all who saw it, and Lieutenant-Colonel Burrows, R.H.A., at once got a fatigue party together, and with the assistance of many willing hands two 15-pounders of the Chestnut Troop were hauled to the summit; they were run forward to a barbed-wire fence, the frontier boundary between Natal and the Orange Colony: this was cut down, and on the enemy's own country our artillery came into action. Three thousand yards away was the pom-pom; with my glasses, as I stood beside our guns, its gunners

were clearly visible; it was firing on Thorneycroft's men, who were lying in the open; so intently were the gunners engaged that the presence of our 15-pounders was as yet unnoticed. Our range-finders take their distance, the guns are 'laid,' the lanyard is pulled, Bang! goes 15-pounder No. 1, Bang! goes its companion: both shells burst close to the pom-pom. A commotion is seen around that gun—pom-pom-pom-pom-pom—its flash is visible; in less than a second it seems—whit! whit! whit! bang! bang! bang! bang! —the shells burst all around us. Such audacity does not last long; two more shells and that pom-pom gun is hit, it collapses: the gunners of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery do not wear the 'crossed cannons'* on their sleeves for naught.

General Wynne's Brigade had in the meanwhile seized the top of the pass, with the South African Light Horse on their left. The mounted men now pursued the enemy, who were retreating westward for some miles over the flat tablelands of the berg. Owing to the intensity of the smoke created by grass fires, our artillery and Brocklehurst's Brigade were unable to co-operate, it being impossible to distinguish friend from foe. Night coming on, the troops bivouacked on the positions they had captured, and although the baggage was ordered up, the roads were so difficult that few, if any, got either food, blankets, or great-coats. Being mid-winter, the night was bitterly cold, and every drop of water froze; we lay in the crisp, frosty grass, under the icy blasts of the Drakensberg, with only what warmth huddled frames could produce at an altitude of over 6,000 feet. General Hildyard's

* Worn by the men of a battery who have won a prize for shooting at a 'practice' camp.

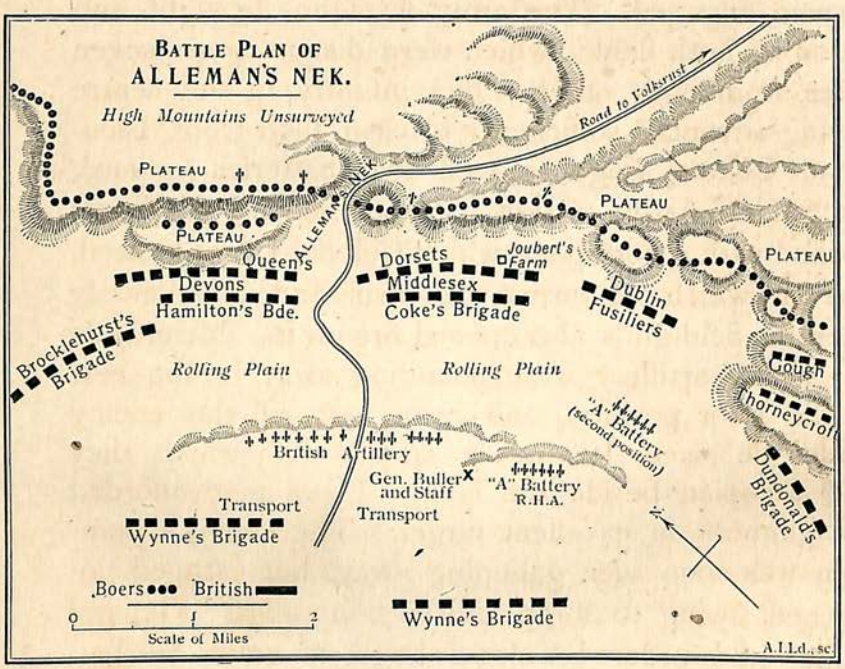
plan for the day had worked without a single flaw; it had been so directed that his centre of attack had come exactly against the enemy's flank, while his left on swinging round had rendered the Boer position untenable, although it had been most carefully prepared with miles of 4 foot 6 inch trenches, and several very strong gun positions. The casualties were: two men killed and one officer and twelve men wounded. During the night the men of the Naval Brigade, under Captain Jones, R.N., moved their guns from Van Wyk. This was a most laborious task, and these men had now been working for thirty-six hours; the Tenth Brigade also moved down from the same hill.

On June 9 the entire day was spent in moving the waggons up the path, which, being very steep, necessitated the use of double teams. Nothing was seen of the enemy, and the troops halted, with the exception of the Eleventh Brigade, which marched along the road towards Gans Vlei for some five miles.

On the 10th the forward movement was resumed, and on the advance-guard reaching Uys Farm, some few miles south of Gans Vlei, a mountain close by, to the east of the farm, was found to be held by the enemy. Against this hill the South African Light Horse were sent forward, supported by our heavy artillery, which were near the head of the columns, and they drove the Boers out. While bivouacs were being taken up, a movement of hostile forces across our front, from east to north, was reported. The Eleventh Brigade and the artillery were sent forward, the Second Cavalry Brigade were sent to our left front, and the South African Light Horse to the north. This checked the enemy, who retired to the hills on the east; some of

the South African Light Horse got heavily engaged until dusk, losing six killed and seven wounded. The Boers left on the hill twenty-two dead, who were buried by our men. That night, the force having reached the extreme northern point of its turning, bivouacked in Transvaal territory, on the northern spurs of Iketini Mountain. The route to be followed next day turned to the east, over some six miles of rolling plain, bounded on the north-east by a high mountain chain, through which only one road led, crossing Alleman's Nek. This position was held by the enemy in force, and three miles beyond this lay Volksrust Plain.

At 5.45 a.m. on June 11, General Hildyard, accompanied by his staff, left his bivouac and proceeded to a ridge, where the General explained his plan of attack. Wynne's Brigade were sent forward to occupy some low hills to the left, and cover that flank with Brocklehurst's Cavalry Brigade on their extreme left. The baggage was moved forward and parked under cover of these troops, who remained stationary while the centre and right of the army made a wheeling movement, Coke's and Hamilton's Brigades moving in succession, Wynne's Brigade becoming a rear-guard. After marching about five miles, Alleman's Nek came in sight, but it was found to be held in greater force than had been anticipated, as were also the hills to our right, against which Dundonald's Mounted Brigade were advancing. At 11 a.m. the heavy guns were moved forward to a small rolling eminence in the plain, in front of the Nek itself, and orders were issued for Coke's and Hamilton's Brigades to advance to the attack, the latter being on the left, and the former on the right. One pom-


BATTLE PLAN OF
ALLEMAN'S NEK.
High Mountains Unsurveyed
Road to Volksrust
PLATEAU
PLATEAU
ALLEMAN'S NEK
PLATEAU
PLATEAU
Queen's
Devons
Hamilton's Bde.
Brocklehurst's Brigade
Dorsets
Middlesex
Coke's Brigade
Joubert's Farm
Dublin Fusiliers
Rolling Plain
Rolling Plain
Gough
Thorneycroft
"A" Battery (second position)
British Artillery
Gen. Buller and Staff
"A" Battery R.H.A.
Dundonald's Brigade
Transport
Wynne's Brigade
Transport
Boers
British
0
1
2
Scale of Miles
Wynne's Brigade
A.I.Ld., sc.

pom was sent with the Queen's, and another with the Devons, who were to cover our left flank.

While these operations were in progress, Dundonald's Brigade, which was covering the advance on our right, became hotly engaged with the enemy on the high mountains south of the Nek; Brocklehurst's Cavalry Brigade, which had advanced on our extreme left, also became engaged. The army was thus brought into action on both flanks, which were distant some seven miles from each other. The infantry in the centre having advanced sufficiently to clear their front, Lieutenant-Colonel Paget moved two batteries forward, the 7th and 64th; as they hastened onward the Boers opened with a pom-pom, which Colonel Paget located, and on which he turned his own, and immediately after his field-guns also opened fire on it. Meanwhile our heavy artillery were pounding away in the rear at the Boer position, and some 200 of the enemy could be seen leaving a conical hill which they had occupied beside the Nek. These men afforded the gunners an excellent target. The enemy's pom-pom was soon seen galloping away, but escaped unscathed, owing to some difficulty in range. General Buller now ordered Colonel Paget to move his batteries forward and to the left, and brought up two long-range 12-pounders and the 61st Howitzer Battery. Under the fire of these guns our infantry advanced within 1,000 yards of the base of the hills, and here lay down in the long veldt grass, which was particularly thick and dry. Meanwhile Dundonald's Brigade were hotly engaged in an extremely hilly country on the right flank, but pressure was relieved on word being sent back to 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery that the enemy were collecting in force on

a certain kloof; the guns were turned on this spot, and terrible damage was inflicted on a large number of Boers and their horses which were sheltering there, and could not get away owing to the rifle-fire of our mounted men. The guns of 'A' Battery now joined in the general fusillade—the conical hill on the Nek itself, and the hills on each side of the road. The shooting was magnificent, the blue-nosed shrapnel shells bursting all over the hill-tops, and the lyddite of the howitzers and long-range guns rising in huge volumes from the surrounding kloofs.

About 1 p.m., as I was eating my lunch beside the horse guns, a Boer shell, the first of the day, came screaming overhead. It was fired by a high-velocity gun on the right of the Nek, and struck the ground 50 yards behind me, amongst a mass of infantry, taking a man's head clean off his body before it burst. This shell was quickly followed by a second, which came in the same line, bursting 15 yards behind the guns. The latter shell made me move on. Then came a third, which burst between the two centre guns, showing they now had our range. Shell number four was dropped between the two right guns, and shell number five beside the two left guns, showing that the enemy were at any rate impartial in selection. These five shells had followed one another with but a few seconds' interval; they all burst, but, save in the first instance, no damage was done. Colonel Burrows having located this gun, 'A' Battery opened fire on it, and silenced it for a time. Almost simultaneously with the report of the first Boer Creusot the deafening roar of a heavy cannonade and rifle-fire reached our ears. Looking towards the direction whence it came, a striking spectacle met our gaze. The infantry were

BATTLE OF ALLEMAN'S NEK: ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY IN ACTION.

E. Blake Knox.

lying in some half-dozen long lines across the plain, 2,000 yards or less from the base of the hill, and about 3,000 yards from us. As at Colenso and at Vaal Krantz, the enemy, having first allowed the front lines to advance within rifle-shot unmolested, now opened a heavy fire; dropping among them were showers of pom-pom shells, stray larger ones, and a hail of bullets. Suddenly the whole plain seemed ablaze with fire and smoke. To everyone's dismay, the rank, dry grass was seen to be on fire. Great volumes of smoke rose to the sky—the firing redoubled. God help the unfortunate infantry! But no, the wind is blowing toward the Boers. Seeing the gravity of their situation when the heavy fire began, some infantry officers had lighted the grass themselves to enable their men to take cover in the smoke. The ruse succeeded well, and what might have caused a heavy casualty list was thus averted. At 2.30 p.m., under cover of this veldt fire, which was smoking the enemy from their lairs, the infantry advanced to the attack. With the Dorsets leading, Coke's Brigade rushed the hills on the right of the Nek; simultaneously Hamilton's Brigade, led by the Queen's, rushed the hill on the left of the Nek, our artillery all the while bombarding the hill-tops. By 5 p.m. the position was carried; the 2nd Dorset and 2nd Middlesex Regiments had secured the crest line of the hills south of the Nek, and the Second Brigade had taken those to its left. Meanwhile, on the right front and flank a severe fight was taking place between the enemy on the eminences and Dundonald's Brigade; but the Boers having fired all the hills, thereby burning some of their own wounded, it was impossible to see anything. The

1st Dublin Fusiliers, who were the connecting link between the right of Coke's Brigade and the left of Dundonald's Mounted Brigade, not to be denied, joined in this quarrel; and the combined action of the Irishmen with the colonials and 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, who had moved to the right, resulted in the enemy being beaten all along the position. The Boers now rapidly retired. The cavalry, with two guns and a pom-pom, were sent in pursuit, but owing to grass fires and smoke their line of retreat could not be followed. At 8 a.m. the entire force bivouacked on Alleman's Nek. Our casualties for the day were 3 officers and 20 men killed and 5 officers and 115 men wounded.

On June 12 the force moved towards Volksrust, near Sandspruit; a large body of the enemy crossed our front, moving northwards. Some of the South African Light Horse and two guns of 'A' Battery, under Lieutenant Weber, were sent forward to intercept them, but the Boers got away, partly round the spur at Sandspruit, and partly by Houtnek. Two of the colonial guides pushed forward into Volksrust; they had no supports, and nearly paid dearly for their daring. While they were demanding the surrender of the town, some armed Boers, rushing from a house, called 'Hands up!' One of the guides, without taking any heed of this demand, drawing his revolver, opened fire from his saddle. His first bullet smashed the Boer leader's jaw, the second the Field-Cornet's shoulder. The rest fled, and the two wounded were led back triumphantly to camp.

We learnt that, owing to our having taken the enemy's position at Alleman's Nek, they had hurriedly evacuated Laing's Nek, that post being now untenable.

During the day General Clery telegraphed to General Buller that he had occupied it, the Natal Volunteers being the first up. We bivouacked for the night about four miles from Volksrust, and during the 13th occupied Sandspruit, Volksrust, and Charlestown, and General Clery's (Second) Division marched through Laing's Nek. This division had been left to divert the enemy's attention at the last-named place when the dash for Botha's Pass was made, and since then it had halted on Ingogo Heights, Inkwelo, and Mount Prospect, where our force was bombarded daily by the Long Tom on Pougwane, which was able to *burst time shrapnel* at 9,600 yards range; two officers and four men were wounded by this gun. How the enemy removed this weapon so rapidly as they did on the night of the 11th was a marvel to all. However, they abandoned the traction-engine which had pulled it up that mountain, and left it beside the gun emplacement at Pougwane.

Next day I had an opportunity of walking over the enemy's defences. The Laing's Nek position is eminently strong by nature; it may be described as a semicircle of three miles of low hills, with high mountains at each end, and a central bastion hill. The mountain on the left is Majuba, and that on the right is Pougwane; both these hills command all approaches to either flank within at least three miles' radius. This entire position was strongly fortified; the trenches, in some places three rows deep, were so arranged as to be invisible from the opposing front, and covered ways had been dug to enable the defenders to get in and out of them unseen by an attacking force. Several gun emplacements with bomb-proof shelters alongside had been hewn out of the solid rock. The slopes of

Majuba, Laing's Nek, Pougwane, and the deep gorge through which the Buffalo River flows, were one mass of such entrenchments; all the approaches to these positions had been burnt, in order that the khaki clothing might be distinctly seen. There was not half an acre of ground within this semicircle that did not come under frontal, cross, and enfilade fire; had any force attacked Laing's Nek, the losses would have been terrific. It was well indeed that Lord Dundonald, when he advanced on the Nek on May 19, had confined himself to reconnaissance, for had he gone on his Brigade would never have returned. Before the enemy retreated they had damaged the railway in many places, and had blown up the Laing's Nek tunnel for some 200 feet at each end. These breaches were repaired before June 18 by the Royal Engineers, under Majors Irvine and Glubb.*

On June 16 General Hildyard, with Dundonald's Cavalry and Wynne's Brigade, was sent from Volksrust to Wakkerstroom, with a view to receiving surrenders. This expedition was most successful, 193 burghers surrendering in the first two days, with 197 rifles and over 80,000 rounds of ammunition. No opposition was met with. The Landdrost of Wakkerstroom, who submitted, was afterwards arrested by the Boers, tried for treason, and, it is said, shot.

In accordance with an order from Lord Roberts to advance on Standerton, General Buller collected his forces at Sandspruit on June 20, General Hildyard coming up from Wakkerstroom on the 19th, leaving it unoccupied, and General Clery from Laing's Nek.

* No less than seventy-two bridges and culverts were blown up by the Boers in Natal; besides these, the railway line was damaged in thirty-two different places.

Next day (June 21) Paardekop, a small station halfway to Standerton, was reached by Dundonald's Brigade and Clery's Division about mid-day. A terrific explosion was heard at Standerton as the enemy blew up the railway-bridge over the Vaal River at that town. It was on this day that Lord Strathcona's Horse joined General Buller's army, from which they received an enthusiastic welcome. As this corps will constantly be referred to in subsequent passages, a brief summary of its history will not be out of place here. None of the soldiers of our colonies and dependencies deserve better of the Empire than the brave Canadians. Enthusiasm rose to its highest pitch throughout the dominion when it was learnt that the colony was to supply contingents to the Mother Country for service in South Africa. Amongst the first to be enrolled were Lord Strathcona's Corps of Mounted Infantry, better known as Strathcona's Horse. This regiment consisted of men—specially chosen for their physique and shooting and riding accomplishments—chiefly enrolled from the North-Western Provinces; most of them had had some experience of previous guerilla warfare such as that in which they were now destined to participate. One would certainly have picked them out anywhere as the *beau-idéal* of men for a spell of the rough-and-tumble work offering itself in South Africa. The officers, like the men, were all picked Canadians; most of them had served in the North-West Police or the Canadian Militia, and had 'roughed it' in all parts of the dominion. The corps was commanded by Colonel S. B. Steele, who had himself seen active service in the North-West, and had already made his name as commander of Steele's Scouts in Riel's second

rebellion. In this campaign he had been specially mentioned in despatches by the officer in command of the Western column—General Strange.

Strathcona's (or as they were afterwards nicknamed, the 'Ikonas') were, in great measure, a revival of Steele's Scouts under their old leader, who had since served in the Rocky Mountains, and later as Commissioner of Mounted Police at the far-famed Klondyke. Strathcona's Horse, from the day on which they joined Lord Dundonald's Brigade, attracted keen attention from all; they were every way original—huge Canadian horses with huge Canadian saddles and wooden stirrups; but what probably drew the eye of the casual observer more than anything else were their lassos and their peculiarly-shaped slouch hats with pyramidally-dinted crowns, the brim of which, being stiff, jutted out all round, like a halo. A fine battery of Maxims and a pom-pom followed in their wake—indeed, Lord Strathcona's Horse had been equipped regardless of cost.

Lord Dundonald left bivouac at an early hour on June 22 with the Third Mounted Brigade, and arrived at Standerton by 4 p.m., having covered over thirty miles. Standerton surrendered without opposition, its officials having bolted half an hour before our arrival, previous to which they, in conjunction with those of the Netherlands Railway, did a considerable amount of wanton damage, burning a great quantity of stores, and damaging some dozen engines by removing their piston-rods.

Standerton, by the way, is a very picturesque town, situated on the banks of the Vaal River, well wooded, and encompassed by a few small hills, against which its red-brick, zinc-roofed buildings surrounded by verandas

and its high-steepled Dutch churches stand out in pleasing relief. The well-built road-bridge over the Vaal River leading into the town was lined by townsfolk as Lord Dundonald's dusty and thirsty column trotted in. Some of the young women wore red, white and blue ribbons in their hats or as rosettes; others showed a fourth—green. The force halted outside the place, where a camping-ground was selected. Lord Dundonald's Provost-Marshal now distributed his military police throughout the town, with strict orders to see that the townsfolk were not annoyed by the too particular attentions of our troops. This forewarning, however, was unnecessary, for the Boer women, unasked, brought forward all kinds of provisions—fowls, eggs, milk, butter, coffee, bread, etc.—for sale, and reaped a golden harvest by asking exorbitant terms. I made the following purchases, prices of which may be of interest: Two small turkeys, 25s.; two loaves of bread, 3s.; two dozen eggs, 4s.; small sack of potatoes, 10s. The Boers were very anxious to know whether the Kruger coinage would be of any use after our occupation, and, while only too glad to pass it off on us, were most particular in taking nothing but British money in return.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF BELFAST

JUNE 30 TO OCTOBER 30

The junction of the Natal Field Force with Lord Roberts' Army—The advance through the Northern Transvaal—The Battle of Belfast—General Buller's last trek—Lydenberg—Pilgrim's Rest—General Buller's farewell.

A HALT was made at Standerton till June 30; the countryside was scoured in all directions, and prisoners, cattle, and forage were brought in. On the 30th a column under Sir Francis Clery marched from Standerton up the railway-line towards Heidelberg. Dundonald's Brigade accompanied this force, leaving the South African Light Horse at Standerton, while Brocklehurst's Brigade, with Bethune's Mounted Infantry, held the line up to that point. Dundonald's Brigade now consisted of Strathcona's Horse, who had joined at Paardekop, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, and four guns of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, with one pom-pom (Strathcona's); it was followed by the Fourth (Light) Brigade, 63rd Battery, one section of an ammunition column, two field howitzers (from 86th Battery,) and two 5-inch guns.

On July 1 Wachout Spruit was reached. An attack

was made on the right flank, but was easily repulsed by Strathcona's, who received their baptism of fire, with a section of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery in support. Captain Howard, of Strathcona's, was captured here, owing to mistaking slouch-hatted Boers for his own men.

Clery's force met with constant opposition, of no serious nature, however; but, still, a number of Boers were always in front and on either flank of the column, and had to be dealt with by the mounted troops. As General Clery was moving with a very large convoy, the flanks were much extended, and an attack from the rear had always to be guarded against; so the work thrown on the mounted men was arduous, and resulted in three or four casualties every day. These casualties would have been more but for the use of machine-guns with the advanced and flanking parties, which cleared away Boer sharpshooters as no dismounted men in small bodies could have done. Greylingstad was reached on July 3, and a halt was made near a disused gold-mine. As we arrived, the high chimney of the mine began smoking with some vigour; this was said to have warned the enemy, who now took up a position on Van Tonder's Kop.

On July 4 Vlakfontein, a station midway between Greylingstad and Heidelberg, was moved on. Vlakfontein village is quite a small place, consisting of about a dozen corrugated-zinc-roofed buildings, mainly occupied by railway employés, and a local hotel store, notable at the time for its lack of provisions. The country round is mainly flat, but the railway-line is commanded by several well-defined ridges of hills. The portion of railway-line in the vicinity of Vlakfontein has on many occasions been the object of

attack and destruction by the Boers. Between Vlakfontein and Greylingstad the line passes in a gorge through a tortuous and dangerous ridge of hills. Lord Dundonald moved along the line to join hands with Major-General Fitzroy Hart at Heidelberg. A short but brisk engagement with the enemy occurred on this occasion; they were driven to the surrounding hills. Previous to their retreat, however, the Boers succeeded in so materially damaging the line that it took some days to set it right again, many bridges and culverts being blown up and the track torn up for many miles.

It was on this day that one of the most striking examples of native heroism that I have ever observed took place. An unarmed native scout, one of Dinizulu's picked warriors, lent by him as chief of the Zulu tribe to the British Government, while out scouting with a body of Strathcona's Horse approached a Boer farm near the railway. From the farm was flying a white flag, and notwithstanding this the enemy, who were hiding, fired a volley from the building. A trooper's horse was shot dead as the man was riding away. The brave Zulu turned, and, rapidly galloping back and jumping from his horse, assisted the dismounted trooper to mount his own horse, and, whipping it up with his sjambok, followed the now mounted man on foot amid a hail of bullets from the enemy and the cheers of the soldiers who saw the brave action. Both escaped, and the Zulu was specially complimented by the General in Army Orders. Had he been other than a native, it is probable that he would have obtained the Victoria Cross for his gallantry.

Two days later, July 6, the enemy made a most

determined attack from the range of hills near Vlakfontein on a convoy and on some troops escorting General Buller, who was passing by on his way to see Lord Roberts at Pretoria.

General Buller had come by train as far as Greylingstad, and, owing to the damage done to the line, had to ride from that station nearly to Heidelberg. Whether the enemy had any intelligence of his presence is impossible to say, but as he passed on his way they made a most determined assault on his little column, bringing their guns and pom-poms into action. Two guns of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, under Lieutenant Eden, promptly turned out of bivouac at Vlakfontein, and an interesting duel took place. Two high-velocity Boer guns and a pom-pom had taken up a position on the flank to enfilade the passage of the convoy, and began firing. Lord Dundonald at once ordered Lieutenant Eden's two guns forward, and at short range he engaged one of the Boer guns and the pom-pom, which were together, with the result that the Boer high-velocity gun was put out of action and six gunners working it were killed and wounded, whilst we lost but one man killed, one wounded, and five horses. It was an exciting duel while it lasted, but the Chestnut Troop was too much at close quarters for the Boer gun.*

While the railway was being repaired, the force was split up into small parties appointed to guard the line. Numbers of Boers living in the vicinity came in daily to take the oath of neutrality, driving into camp in their light Cape-carts, or 'spiders,' as they are called, all flying white flags. Captain Phillips, R.E., Lord

* Our field-guns could always knock out any Boer guns, provided they got within range.

Dundonald's Provost Marshal, had quite a busy time of it, seated at his camp-table to receive rifles and ammunition, and making out the necessary 'declaration' forms for these burghers to sign. Very remarkable was the nondescript array of weapons brought in—old flint-locks, percussion-cap muzzle-loaders, Martini-Henrys—the Mauser alone being the rarest and most conspicuous by its absence.

On July 11 General Clery's force returned to Greylingstad, at which place two 4·7 guns were mounted on the hills over the line and left with a garrison. The main body left camp at 8 a.m., Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry leading, and proceeded to Vitpoort with a view to attacking the Boer laager behind Van Tonder's Kop. Dundonald, reconnoitring to the north, got in touch with the enemy, who retired, firing the veldt on their way. On the following morning the pursuit was taken up, and the enemy were perceived in force at Platkop. Strathcona's Horse, who were in advance, found themselves in a 'hot corner,' and sustained some casualties. Owing to some mistake, their pom-pom gun, under Lieutenant Magee, got cut off and surrounded, and would perhaps have fallen into the enemy's hands but for the gallantry of the Canadians, who, loosing their lassos, charged the awestricken Boers, brandishing the long ropes in their faces until the gun-team had got about. Dundonald at once reinforced with Thorneycroft's, and brought 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery into action at a range of 1,350 yards under what might be fairly styled a 'hellish' rifle-discharge. A well-directed shrapnel-fire was brought to bear on the whole crest, and soon the enemy fled, pursued by our mounted men. The guns limbered up and

BOERS TAKING OATH OF NEUTRALITY SWORN AT GREYLINGSTAD. PROVOST-MARSHAL RECEIVING ARMS.

From the *Graphic*, by E. BLAKE KNOX.

joined in the pursuit. Some three miles further on, the Boers, about 1,500 strong, were seen galloping across a wide valley to the north, and now the Chestnut Troop came into action and made some good shooting. Again the guns limbered up and the chase continued. Some six miles further the enemy went helter-skelter over a ridge, the advance to which lay across a level plain.

At this juncture a message was received by the Horse Battery stating that their services were wanted, as a large Boer convoy was within range 'just round the corner.' Up went the guns, through smoke and dust, among Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, and suddenly, when the scouts were within 500 yards of the crest, they were greeted with a terrific rifle-fire. Not having any cover, the scouts were forced to fall back on the guns, which, owing to excusable eagerness, had been pushed on nearer to the scouts than usual, so that at 1,500 yards' range bullets were spitting all round us. Two gunners being shot, one on each side of me, I had to jump from my horse to succour them. Pit! pit! whit! pit! pit! whit! the bullets simply seethed around, richochetting off the guns and wheels. The command 'Action front!' was scarce audible above the din, though it was shouted loudly. In a second the guns were 'laid,' and shrapnel was searching the crest. Simultaneously Strathcona's historical pom-pom and Dundonald's Colts came into action from either flank, enfilading the enemy's position, and Thorneycroft's men were directing a steady rifle-fire from around the guns. The enemy, unable to stand this concentrated fusillade, fired the veldt, and retired under cover of the smoke.

A curious incident now occurred. The enemy opened fire from either flank with a high-velocity gun and a pom-pom upon the very crest that they had abandoned, evidently thinking that it had been occupied by us; this must have given their retreating comrades a pretty hot time, to say the least. Night was falling fast, and as we were a long way from our main body, Dundonald's Brigade did not pursue further; his casualties amounted to eleven killed and wounded, while the enemy were known to have buried eight Boers, and natives reported that a number of wounded had been removed to Bethel.

From Platkop General Clery led us on a 'personally conducted tour' eastward across the Waterval River, near which Sergeant A. H. L. Richardson, of Strathcona's Horse, won the Victoria Cross when thirty-eight of his regiment were engaging eighty of the enemy. After the order to retire had been given, Sergeant Richardson rode back under fire to pick up a wounded trooper whose horse had been shot, and brought him to a place of safety. This gallant officer, the first Canadian to win the V.C., was afterwards presented with a purse of £3,000 by his fellow-Canadians. General Clery now decided to move on Bethel, where the enemy were reported to have prepared an ugly position for us; but on July 20 orders were received from Lord Roberts directing us to move on Heidelberg again, as it was imperative that the line of railway from Durban to Pretoria, along which the food supply to the capital was now being forwarded, should be protected. This sent us all upon another 'circular tour,' with its attending discomforts—frosty bivouacks on cold Mother Earth, ice to the thickness of three inches on the solitary pools (our sole water

supplies), which prevented us from watering our horses until after 9 a.m., and morning fogs, under cover of which we were continually sniped. I must say that continuous ambushes, close volleys, and fogs give one the 'jumps' as nothing else can, and surely no greater relief can be experienced by the trekker than to behold the open county ahead once more when a fog clears off. Having posted Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry on the railway in scattered posts between Standerton and Heidelberg, Lord Dundonald rapidly marched back to the former place, where we one and all joyfully filled up our private supplies from the Field Force Canteen. This admirable institution was organized by Major (now Lieut.-Colonel) Morgan, A.S.C., and throughout the Natal campaign and hereafter Major Morgan will have to his credit a debt of gratitude that none but a medical officer can ever fully appreciate. *By placing such facilities for obtaining food in reach of officers and men, the Major did more than can ever be realized to build up our constitutions and baffle the common foe, enteric fever.*

From Standerton we marched to Paardekop to join General Buller, who was mobilizing a large force for the great northern advance on Machadodorp in combination with Lord Roberts from Pretoria. This force consisted of the troops who had gone through the siege of Ladysmith (now quite fit again, and desirous of wiping out old scores), formed into a division under General Lyttelton, General Brocklehurst's Cavalry Brigade and that under Lord Dundonald; General Burn-Murdoch's Cavalry Brigade being left to watch the Natal borders, and Bethune's, Thorneycroft's, and Gough's Mounted Infantry ap-

pointed to guard the line from Volksrust to Heidelberg.

On August 7 Sir Redvers Buller moved out, and marched from Paardekop towards Amesfoort, eighteen miles distant; outside the latter town he fought a very stiff general engagement against Botha, who was heavily entrenched with eleven guns on the heights. This position the Boer Generalissimo was stated to have expressed his ability to maintain against the whole British Army. The boast proved fallacious. General Buller's centre consisted of General Walter Kitchener's Seventh Infantry Brigade and General Howard's Eighth Infantry Brigade, Dundonald's cavalry covering the left and Brocklehurst the right of the advance, and thoroughly securing both flanks and driving the enemy before them. Early in the day Dundonald became seriously engaged, and his Horse Artillery on one occasion had a 'target' such as seldom fell to their lot in the war, when the Swaziland Police, whom the Boers considered one of their toughest commandos, attempted a charge in close formation. The Chestnut Troop got their range to an inch, and, pounding their opponents with shrapnel, caused them to retire, leaving many dead on the field. While our heavy artillery under Colonel Parsons, C.R.A., was bombarding the Boer centre with lyddite, Dundonald got his opportunity. Sweeping round their right flank, he enfiladed it completely with his horse battery and riflemen, causing them to abandon it and break in confusion towards their left flank, which was being hemmed in by Brocklehurst; seeing this, they retreated, mainly towards Lake Chrissie and Wakkerstroom. In Amesfoort we found the Swiss ambulance under Dr. Schüter,

who, by their own request, were given a safe transit through our lines to Durban; they were 'fed up' with the Boers, so they said, and longed to get home. Buller next advanced on Ermelo, one of the so-called Boer capitals, and, amid a sandstorm, Dundonald entered that place on the 11th, and the infantry followed the next day.

On August 14 Carolina was occupied by a squadron of Strathcona's Horse after a brisk skirmish, and the same day some of Brocklehurst's Brigade joined hands with French's scouts from Middelberg. On August 15 Buller's force reached Twyfelaar, and received orders from Lord Roberts to halt until he was ready for the advance on Belfast. On August 21 we marched from Twyfelaar to Van Wyk's Vlei, meeting with considerable opposition from the enemy, who were in large numbers, with guns. On the 23rd Geluk was reached, and here we had a pretty stiff engagement, in which the Liverpools lost some seventy men. In the vicinity of Geluk a Boer farm was burnt by orders, as a wounded Gordon Highlander was treacherously shot dead from it while endeavouring to drag himself to the farmhouse for help.

On August 24 General Pole-Carew, with the Eleventh Division, occupied Belfast, with a total of sixteen casualties.

Early the following day (25th) Lord Roberts arrived at Belfast and held a council of war, at which Generals Buller, French, and Pole-Carew were present. As it was evident that the main Boer Army was pitted against us, two alternatives presented themselves:

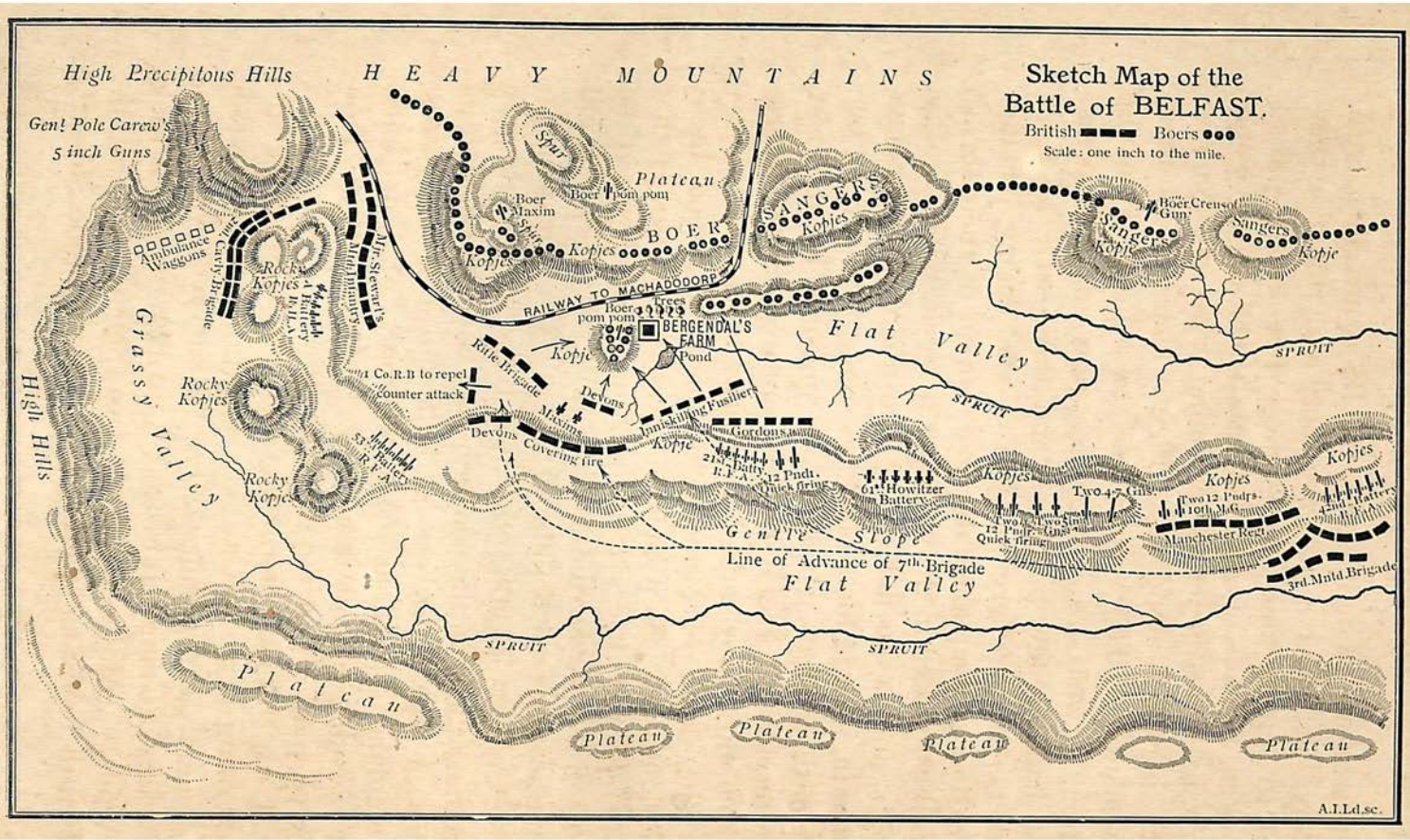
1. To hold the enemy in front with one force, while another operating from the south turned his left flank.

2. To hold the enemy in front as before, while

another force operating from the north-west turned his right flank.

The first alternative was abandoned, as the country, being very broken and irregular, was most unfavourable for a turning movement from the south-east. The second was decided upon, and for this purpose Lord Roberts directed that General French, with two brigades of cavalry, should advance to Laken Vlei, six miles to the north of Belfast, thus threatening the enemy's right flank and his line of retreat on the north-west to Lydenberg. General Pole-Carew, with the Eleventh Infantry Division and Colonel Henry's Mounted Infantry, was to advance along the Lydenberg Road and support General French. General Buller was to retain the Boer left about Geluk, and finally to assault the enemy's centre about Bergendal and Dalmanutha.

On August 26 General French moved from Geluk, twelve miles south of Belfast, on his passage north, and after an eighteen miles' march reached Laken Vlei in the evening. General Pole-Carew moved along the Lydenberg Road in his support, but owing to heavy opposition made but little progress. General Buller occupied the enemy's attention near Geluk, and succeeded in driving back the Boers from some strong positions they were holding at the south-east of Belfast, to within four miles of the railway between that town and Dalmanutha; having achieved this object, his force marched towards Waai Kraal. The enemy, perceiving us on the move, made a most determined attack on our rear-guard, which consisted of the Third Mounted Brigade (Lord Dundonald's), 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, Inniskilling Fusiliers, Devons, and four quick-firing 12-pounders. This action was


Sketch Map of the Battle of BELFAST.
British
Boers
Scale: one inch to the mile.
High Precipitous Hills
HEAVY MOUNTAINS
Gen! Pole Carew's 5 inch Guns
Spur
Plateau
Boer Maxim
Boer pom pom
BOER
SANGERS
Kopjes
Boer Crews of Gun
Sangers Kopje
Ambulance Waggons
Mr. Stewart's Mounted Infantry
Rocky Kopjes
RAILWAY TO MACHADODORP
Trees
BERGENDAL'S FARM
Pond
Flat Valley
SPRUIT
Grassy Valley
High Hills
1 Co. R.B to repel counter attack
Rifle Brigade
Devons
Maxims
Covering fire
Inniskilling Fusiliers
Gordons
Line of Advance of 7th Brigade
Gentle Slope
61st Howitzer Battery
12 Pndr. Quick firing
Two 4·7 Guns
Two 12 Pndrs. 10th M.G.
Manchester Regt
3rd Mntd Brigade
Plateau
A.I.Ld.sc.

quite exciting while it lasted, the Boers attacking most boldly, but under a heavy artillery and rifle fire they had to retreat time after time. The attack spread all along the line of advance, and soon all the force and its guns were in action, changing their positions as they marched along the ridge which led to their destination. The enemy had two Long Toms in action, as well as many smaller guns and pom-poms. We had but few casualties, and these were all from bullets; the artillery practice of the enemy on this occasion only equalled the composition of their shells. We bivouacked in the dark on a bleak, barren, rocky kopje, and as the tail of the rear-guard (the Devons) came in, a large force of Boers tried to rush them, but were driven off at very close quarters by the 21st Battery Royal Field Artillery opening magazine-fire, which must have caused very many casualties.

The dawn of Monday, August 27, issued in a glorious day. As it became known to the troops that Lord Roberts had placed the Natal Field Force in the post of honour for the day, the utmost enthusiasm and gratification prevailed in all ranks. The Commander-in-Chief, in selecting the Natal Army to make the frontal attack on the centre of the enemy's position on this, the day of the battle of Belfast, paid it the greatest compliment possible. And 'Tommy' of Natal knew it; he appreciated it, and was on his mettle. How he played his part the day will show.

Early in the morning General Buller made the following dispositions: The Second Cavalry Brigade (General Brocklehurst), 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery (Colonel Burrows), 53rd Battery Royal Field Artillery (Major Gordon), two pom-poms, and the Fourth Divisional Mounted Infantry (Major Stewart),

were sent forward to the left to cover the line of advance, and at the same time to throw their left forward to the north across the Belfast-Dalmanutha ridge, so as to obtain such an artillery position as would more or less enfilade Bergendal Kopje and the slope of the ridges to its north, thus preventing any attempt to reinforce these positions from other ridges to their north, while an infantry assault was being made on Bergendal itself from the south. These movements were excellently carried out, and some time before mid-day a heavy enfilade fire was being poured on the enemy from our extreme left from carefully selected positions by 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery and the Fourth Divisional Mounted Infantry. This fire inflicted great loss on the enemy, and must have contributed considerably to the success of the day's operations. While it was in progress, the Seventh Infantry Brigade, under General F. W. Kitchener, moved forward under cover of the rolling slopes facing Bergendal on the south, detaching on its way the 1st Manchester Regiment, which entrenched on the eastern crests of this ridge.*

Under cover of this battalion the artillery took up positions along the summit of the ridge in the following order from right to left:

Two 12-pounders, 10th Mountain Battery.
Two 4·7, 6th Company Royal Garrison Artillery (Western Division).
Two 5-inch, 16th Company Royal Garrison Artillery (Southern Division).
Two 12-pounders, 2nd Company Royal Garrison Artillery (Western Division).
61st Howitzer Battery Royal Field Artillery.
Two 12-pounders, Royal Garrison Artillery.
21st Battery Royal Field Artillery.

* Hereafter indicated as 'Gun Ridge.'

The 42nd Battery Royal Field Artillery, from an entrenched position on the right of the Manchesters, were able to prevent any movement of the enemy to reinforce his left from the south, and 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery were able to prevent any reinforcing on his right from the north. This latter object was also much assisted by two 4·7 naval guns posted on Monument Hill at Belfast, which Lord Roberts, who was watching the engagement, had ordered to co-operate. As battery after battery took its allotted place in this long line of guns and went into action, the cannonade became terrific, and about 11 a.m. the fury of the fire was at its height. The whole Boer position was bombarded for a time, but after a while a small kopje beside Bergendal's Farm became the target of a converging artillery-fire. This kopje, which lay some 300 yards to the west of the farm, was a peculiar one, and was occupied in force by the Z.A.R. Police,* who were provided with a pom-pom. It was formed by a conglomeration of huge boulders, affording some three acres of excellent cover, and, rising abruptly from the plain, formed an exceedingly strong natural fortress. Some 500 yards north of this kopje was the enemy's main position, heavily entrenched with men and guns. The ground which intervened between this kopje and General Buller's position sloped away gently in all directions, affording no cover of any sort to advancing troops for at least 2,000 yards.

Towards mid-day General Kitchener's brigade, having advanced up the valley behind and under cover of Gun Ridge, deployed, and took up the following

* The South African Republic Police, or, as they were more popularly known, the *Zarps*, were considered the flower of the Boer army.

positions: 2nd Gordons in front of the 21st Battery Royal Field Artillery, with the Inniskillings to their left front and facing Bergendal's Farm from the south-west, on the left of the Inniskillings the Devons, and to their left the 1st Rifle Brigade. All these regiments were accompanied by their Maxims. One company of the Rifle Brigade formed a connecting link with the 4th Divisional Mounted Infantry of General Brocklehurst's Brigade on the left. For three hours our artillery bombarded the enemy's position with lyddite and shrapnel, which kept up an incessant hail on his trenches. The howitzer-fire was particularly effective, as was also that of our infantry, who were lying down, lining the crest lines in front of the guns.

Notwithstanding this, the Boer fire was extremely hot; shower after shower of rifle bullets, Maxim bullets, and shells swept Gun Ridge, and kept dropping into the valley behind, causing no little damage among our transport and artillery horses. When all the troops were in position, and as it became evident that a frontal attack would carry the day, General Buller turned all his artillery on the centre of the Boer position: big guns and small guns, 'cow' guns and Maxims, all fired a salvo. A truly terrific and awful roar rose in the air, which must have been audible from Pretoria to the sea, as for several minutes shell after shell hurled itself against Botha and his men. Simultaneously General Kitchener ordered his infantry to assault. Lieutenant-Colonel Metcalfe, who had moved the 1st Rifle Brigade from under cover of the ridge from which our guns had been firing (Gun Ridge), and had placed his battalion across the main east and west ridge, on which Bergendal's Kopje stands, assaulted it from the front and west. Lieutenant-Colonel Payne,

who had moved the Inniskilling Fusiliers down the face of Gun Ridge, assaulted the flank of this kopje from the south. The 1st Devons supported the left centre, and the 2nd Gordons the right. At the moment of starting to descend Gun Ridge, the leading companies of the Inniskillings were met by a heavy and accurate pom-pom and rifle fire, which staggered them for a second, but on they pressed without delay. Still the Boers hold their ground. In amongst them rush the infantry. Our artillery cease for a moment to adjust their sights and load with time shrapnel. Bayonets glitter as the infantry double across the plain. The Boers stand up in their trenches emptying their rifles to the last moment. But they are doomed. Assailed in front by the Rifle Brigade, assailed in flank by the Inniskillings, their cause is hopeless. The majority break and fly, some on horseback, some on foot, and a band of some twenty or thirty Z.A.R. Police are made prisoners. The rest fly, and upon them our guns turn with a vengeance. All our field batteries vie with each other to see which will get in the most rounds. Time shrapnel is burst with beautiful and most accurate precision over the fugitive band that breaks north across the railway-line. Men on foot and men on horses caught in that hail are seen to stumble and fall. The Boer retreat is marked by huddled forms. From the left flank the Second Cavalry Brigade 'stand to their horses,' and, mounting, press in hot pursuit. 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery limbers up; away they follow. As we pass over the battlefield the guns have to zigzag widely in their headlong pace, for scattered all along our course lies many a dead or wounded Rifleman, with pale or piteous face, as the gun wheels

go by. Bergendal's Kopje is reached and passed, and on a ridge to its north-east, among the trenches recently occupied by the enemy, 'A' Battery comes into action once more and firing is resumed.

The attack by the infantry just described was a most gallant one. It was made without the assistance of any cover whatsoever, and the moment Bergendal's Kopje was carried the Rifle Brigade, who had their gallant Colonel wounded leading the charge, and who were now led by Major G. Cockburn, D.S.O., rushed the plateau and carried all before them. They were supported by the Devons, who had come up on the left, and the Gordons and Inniskillings, who joined in on the right. While the honours of the day rest with the gunners, those of the assault belong to the Rifle Brigade, as they had to attack a part of the enemy's position over a bullet-swept plain which afforded no shelter. The carrying of such a position, held as it was by resolute men of the stamp of the Z.A.R. Police, will for ever remain present to the minds of those who witnessed it as the most gallant feat of arms in the battle of Belfast. Brocklehurst's Cavalry Brigade and the Seventh Infantry Brigade followed the enemy for over three miles towards Dalmanutha, when, owing to the extremely rocky nature of the ground and the lateness of the hour, further progress was not possible for the present. The success of the day's action was decisive. Its effect was such that the enemy gave way at all points, flying in great confusion towards the north and east, towards Lydenberg and Machadodorp. Except, however, for one gun, a pom-pom, complete with its mules and ammunition, which the Rifle Brigade captured on Bergendal's Kopje, the enemy got all their artillery

away. This was not surprising, as all their other guns were so scattered, and were at such distances away on the hill-tops, that it was impossible for us to reach them.

On reaching Bergendal's Farm, I was detailed by Colonel Allin to assist the wounded, of whom there were some 150 of our men and about two dozen Boers. The empty, shrapnel-riddled farm-house itself was immediately turned into a temporary hospital, and alongside it, within fifteen minutes after the battle, Major Brannigan, R.A.M.C., pitched his field hospital.* Among the Boer prisoners was the Commandant of the Z.A.R. Police, who informed his captors that his experience on the kopje was 'frightful and undescribable.' After the wounded were comfortably cared for, I had an opportunity of visiting the kopje. It presented a terrible example of what the severity of modern shell-fire can do. Among the dead was the Field-Cornet of Johannesburg. Lord Roberts arrived on the field during the afternoon, and congratulated General Buller on the day's operations, as carried out by the Natal Army.

Early next morning, the 28th, Lord Dundonald took up the pursuit, and cleverly drove the Boers from ridge to ridge towards Machadodorp. We got past Dalmanutha Station unopposed; but soon after the fighting began it became manifest that the Boers were fighting a rear-guard action, freely using two guns and a pom-pom. Lord Dundonald's artillery, the Chestnut Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, was constantly in action, and Major Birdwood got severely wounded in one of these checks. We were in Macha-

* This is an example of what a mobile field hospital can do in modern warfare.

dodorp at mid-day, and, without giving the enemy a moment's rest, pressed on up to the hill-tops to the east of the town. The road up these hills is very steep, and it falls as rapidly again on the other side, crossing an open space, and then climbs straight up a second hill; the top of this second hill thoroughly commands the first ridge. This was an ideal position for a rear-guard, and though we could see the road as it climbed to the second ridge crowded with retreating waggons, etc., such a fire was opened on us in our exposed position on the first ridge from the second and commanding one that it was impossible to do anything—at any rate, until we were joined by the infantry, who were marching along, with their usual pluck and endurance, behind. The Boers had some six guns, including one 4·7 howitzer and one or more Long Toms, which fired shrapnel with alarming accuracy. The force therefore remained for the time in possession of the first heights. Before long came the heavier guns, 5-inch and 12-pounder quick-firers, and the Gordon Highlanders. These guns quickly silenced the fire; but it was now nearly dark, and we were glad to water the horses, who were thoroughly done up, and get a little rest ourselves.

Early next morning we were up again, and soon found that the Boers had once more gone in the night. Helvetia lies at the top of this second ridge, and arriving there, we turned south towards Waterval Onden. General French's cavalry now came up from the extreme left of the advance, and as his column passed through our camp it received a most enthusiastic reception. French's baggage column consisted of the most nondescript assortment of vehicles that one can imagine—Cape-carts, dogcarts, phaetons, and

even busses, all captured from the Boers in his many engagements. From Waterval Onden General Buller took Dundonald's Brigade to Helvetia, whence at an early hour on the 30th we started to release the British prisoners at Nooitgedach. Reaching the heights over this hamlet, we saw the prisoners streaming back up the railway-line, having released themselves, the enemy having retreated towards Komati Poort.

On September 1 we commenced our advance on Lydenburg, Badfontein being reached on this day. Brocklehurst's cavalry, pushing ahead, seized the bridge over the Crocodile River, and Dundonald occupied Kopje Aileen, which commanded the valley. On September 2 we all had a most exciting day. Dundonald's Brigade left camp at daylight to clear the way for the main advance. Badfontein Valley is enclosed by a precipitous amphitheatre of hills. 'Bimbashi' Stewart's Mounted Infantry acted as advance guard. Two miles from camp opposition was met with from the range of hills which shuts the valley in on the north. A Boer pom-pom opened the day; four guns of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery were sent forward to silence it, the other two guns being kept behind to protect the flanks. Hardly had we come into action when the whole Boer crescent of hills started blazing.

In front appeared two immense puffs of smoke, which left us in no doubt at all as to the presence of two 6-inch guns there. Almost immediately another opened from the right front, and a 4·7 howitzer put in his claim from the left. These, with the original pom-poms and some small guns, covered the whole position of the brigade with a plaster of shrapnel and other shells. There was no real cover

of any kind, and the only thing to be done was to get right out of the way, and take advantage of the ground in trying to gain any slight shelter available. Strathcona's Horse were on the flanks mostly, and the South African Light Horse and Stewart's Mounted Infantry deployed along a donga well to the front, which was positively the only true cover there. Even this was most unfortunately searched by the high-angle shrapnel of the howitzer. Lord Dundonald at once galloped his brigade forward in open order, and, occupying some kopjes in front, got his men right into the bed of a river for cover. Further progress by our main body was impossible without great loss, and as the enemy's position could be turned by Ian Hamilton's force, should it advance from Belfast through Dulstroom, the point had to be decided by Dundonald whether to retire across the open for four miles by day under the fire of powerful guns, in full sight of the Boers, or wait until night, and slip out of the kopjes and river-bed in the darkness. He decided to stay where he was. The Boers during the course of the day fired three ox-waggon-loads of shells, or, in other words, a weight of 12,000 pounds of iron. Only one man was killed and thirteen wounded on that day. If he had retired during the daytime along the open valley, there can be no question but that he must have lost heavily, and the moral effect of such a retirement would have been most damaging. Few would have believed that a full brigade of cavalry could conceal itself so effectually and sustain such trifling loss through a whole day with 96-pound shells bursting all over it, but so it was.

Soon it became necessary to remove the horses

of the four guns, and these were sent away. The other two guns were out in the open behind, with their horses at any rate partially concealed from view by a single row of eucalyptus-trees, about 50 yards long, belonging to a neighbouring farm, with a convenient little stream of water running along behind.

And such was the position from 11 a.m. until it was dark enough to make it safe to move again. Quite deserted as the plain was, one would have thought not a soul was near at first sight. A remarkable example was given of the accuracy of the shrapnel of these 6-inch guns at an immense distance.

As the evening sun set over the western hills, it showed up the harness of the artillery horses behind the trees. In a moment the 6-inch guns turned on, and before anything could be done, two shrapnel shells burst right over the heads of these horses, killing nine and wounding eight. The men, being between the horses, were covered partially, and only two were hit. That same night orders were issued with a view to making a flank attack on the Boer position. The advance was to be made by General Ian Hamilton's force, and General Brocklehurst's Brigade of Cavalry was to join Hamilton for that purpose. With Brocklehurst was one section of the Chestnut Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, under Lieutenant Weber. This brigade left Badfontein at 5 a.m., and marched, viâ Helvetia, to the top of some hills to the north-west of the latter place, where they got in touch (by lamp-signalling) with General Hamilton at Swart Kopjes.

On September 6 they came up with General Hamilton's force, which included Smith-Dorrien's Brigade. The whole of this march was over some of

the roughest country in the Transvaal, with the worst roads. But little opposition was offered by the Boers, or the force could not possibly have done it. As it was, both horses and men were tired out, and it was only by the greatest effort that the guns could be got up the hills. After the meeting of Hamilton and Brocklehurst, the force moved on, with cavalry well in front, along a river to a gorge, in which any opposition would have made advance impossible. But little was offered, and the cavalry debouched safely in the Lydenburg plain at the further end of the pass. Near Lydenburg they came under artillery fire at a very long range from some hills on the other side of the town. Lydenburg was occupied by a small detachment, and the main body of the force bivouacked some distance off.

On the 7th the town was occupied by both forces, General Buller's troops coming by the direct road from Badfontein, which they found evacuated. In the afternoon, while in the town, we had a very unpleasant bombardment from the top of the hills to its east, where the Boers brought two or three Long Toms into action. They bombarded merrily for some time, but no one seemed to get hit, and eventually it grew dark. But little damage was done to the town, in spite of the enormous target offered. Lydenburg was a pretty little place, well stocked with provisions, quite unsuited to its name of Town of Mourning, given it by the old 'Trek' Boers, as the place where their men died from the fever which they contracted during their wanderings in the bush veldt, always a most unhealthy place in the summer, and lying not more than ten or fifteen miles away from Lydenburg.

On September 8 the Boer position outside the town

was attacked. The 6-inch guns opened in the morning, but, as they saw the attack developing, they retired. There was a good deal of opposition. The infantry attack was made by General Smith-Dorrien's troops and General Walter Kitchener's. The 20th Battery got some attention from the Boer pom-poms in the centre, and the 1st Gordons* had the misfortune to get a 6-inch shrapnel shell right into the midst of one of their companies as it was debouching from a spruit (six miles away from the gun that fired it), which killed and wounded eighteen of their men. Otherwise there were but few casualties, and by night the hill was in our possession. During the attack General Brocklehurst had guarded the right, and had been pressing on the Boer left, while Lord Dundonald was on the left.

The next day General Ian Hamilton marched away, and with Brocklehurst's Cavalry Brigade and the Rifle Brigade left at Lydenburg, Buller's army went forward, much reduced in numbers. He had with him Dundonald's Brigade (South African Light Horse and Strathcona's Horse, Stewart's Mounted Infantry, and 'A' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery), the 53rd and 61st Field Batteries, the Devons, 2nd Gordons, and 1st King's Royal Rifles. From the top of the hills over Lydenburg the road goes straight down across a deep valley and up another steep ridge. On the top of this strong opposition was met with, two pom-poms and a gun being turned on, and a good deal of rifle-fire. 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery came on and brought five guns up to the top, and later the sixth, which had temporarily stuck on the hill. No sooner had they appeared than whole belts of pom-pom shells seemed

* It is remarkable that on this day the two battalions of the Gordons were side by side.

to burst right into the guns; others, passing over, fell among the horses and waggons drawn up some distance back. Several horses were killed and wounded, and there were a few casualties amongst the men. The horse guns worked steadily all the time, searching the Boer position, and, with the 53rd Battery on their left, silenced the enemy's fire.

The force again advanced, meeting with opposition all the way; eventually we came to the top of the Mauchberg, and here we saw the whole Boer Army. With this sight one seemed to forget it was really war. We had viewed our quarry, and the thing became at once a hunt. Regardless of whatever fire might be turned on us (for we saw their 6-inch guns), everyone was standing up, shouting 'Tally-ho!' and men could be seen climbing up to the highest part of the hill, to see better the events which might take place in the next hour. The Horse Artillery guns were hurried up as quickly as possible—even the tired-out Chestnut Walers seemed to know something was up—but, alas! the road was out of range for field-guns, and our heavy guns were too far behind. The Boers had a very strong rear-guard, which would have probably caused heavy losses had we climbed down Hell's Gate, the precipitous pass which led to the Devil's Knuckles below, and even when there we would have had to cross several hundred yards of open before beginning to be on even terms with our adversaries. It was already getting dark, so further advance was too risky.

On the 10th at dawn the heavy guns were in position, and were exchanging shots with the Boer Long Toms from the top of the Mauchberg. The enemy had still kept their heavy guns on the Devil's Knuckles to protect their rear-guard. No better

position could have been chosen. They were partially protected from sight by a rise in the ground, with a slope behind down which they could easily retire if hard pressed, and a mile of open country in front of them, which contained the only approach. They could with impunity stop a little longer and fire off their last taunts at us as we stood there shouting in impotent rage, 'So near, but yet so far!' Even then Dame Fortune tantalized us with her games. As a big team of oxen came up to retire their last Long Tom, every man at our guns nerved himself to the utmost to do what was required. A shell from one of our 5-inch guns hit the pole-chain just as the team began to get into draught. The dead oxen were removed, the ends of the chain tied together, and the whole great clumsy thing started once more. One can imagine the excitement of the moment, the shouting of the Kaffir drivers, and the feelings of those gallant Boer gunners as they saw gun after gun turned on them, and heard each shell coming, perhaps to pitch just where they were! But they did their work well, and Long Tom got away, notwithstanding Strathcona's went after them and poured in a heavy rifle-fire.

On September 11 the main force went down Hell's Gate, leaving a force up at the top, and we found our way past broken waggons, deserted ammunition-carts, and other traces of hurry and retreat to Devil's Knuckles, along the very road we had watched with such eager eyes a few hours back. Some troops were sent down into the Sabie valley, and some went along the road to Spitz Kop. Dundonald's Brigade went to the former place, but was ordered up again in the evening to bivouac for some days at Devil's Knuckles, while Buller went on himself with some of his force to

Spitz Kop. The day was spent in harassing the enemy, and when the last gun of the Horse Artillery toiled, weary, into camp about midnight, right glad were we to get a rest.

Until the 21st a halt was made to get up supplies. On that date all connecting posts between Devil's Knuckles and Lydenburg were withdrawn, and we marched down the hill to Twafontein, in the Sabie River Valley. The line of communication was now viâ Waterval Onder and Spitz Kop.

On the 25th Buller's force joined us from Spitz Kop, and with full supply column we advanced next day north-north-east towards Pilgrim's Rest. At Burgher's Pass, by Mac Mac, we met with some opposition, but while the Boers kept up a fire on the pass from in front, the Devonshire Regiment from the left attacked the right flank of what Boers were there, and by 5 p.m. the pass was in our possession, the Devons being on the top, and the rest of the force bivouacking where they were at Geelhuikboom. We had eight casualties in all.

On the 27th we marched on at 6 a.m. up Mac Mac Mountain, along a bad road, to the top of the pass; from this down the valley, camping four miles short of Pilgrim's Rest. The hamlet of that name was invaded, and found to be full of most welcome stores of food, wine, etc., and we were regaled with some fresh vegetables—indeed a find. The road out of Pilgrim's Rest wound up a fearful hill, which was crowned with rocky boulders commanding the road for miles. The Boers, knowing the strength of this position, meant to stand here, but they were circumvented by Dundonald, who on the night of the 27th started the South African Light Horse up a bridle-path some miles to the left of

the road, and seized the heights. Reinforcing rapidly with his brigade, he took the Boers in flank and drove them off the plateau commanding the road, which he held that night, and enabled the troops to come up on the following day without any opposition. Then Buller's force marched to Morgenzou, which they occupied.

This was done quite early, so that the main force was able to march along the valley in safety, through Pilgrim's Rest, up the mountain-side, in the direction of Kruger's Post and Lydenburg.

The whole of the 29th was occupied in getting the main force, its guns and transport, up to the top. Every gun and every waggon required double teams or a double span of mules, the more willing among the latter being put in over and over again, until at last we were all safe up the hill. A halt was made on the 30th.

On October 1 General Buller's force turned south-east, through difficult country, to Kruger's Post. The road seemed interminable in its dulness and dust, and our rear-guard reached bivouac-ground long after dark, only to receive a severe shelling from some hills to the west. What had happened was as follows: Buller's force, marching in from Pilgrim's Rest, had sent for a force from Lydenburg to come out and meet them at Kruger's Post, about eight miles out from there, in a northerly direction. For this purpose General Brocklehurst's Brigade had come from Lydenburg that morning, and ascertained that Kruger's Post was unoccupied. It was therefore with a feeling of security that we marched in, tired and dusty, to the last-mentioned little hamlet. That feeling of security was, however, but ill-grounded. Hardly had the advance troops of Buller's force come in and begun to

settle down for the night, when away to the west came a flash, showing up bright in the dusk of the evening. It was followed by the well-known bang, whizzzzz, burrrrr! The camp was being shelled. All rest was now at an end, and it was necessary to pack up again and move elsewhere in the dark. Next day we marched quietly into Lydenburg, and found that joy of a trekker's life—the English mail of the last week waiting for us. Since leaving Lydenburg on September 9, Dundonald's Brigade had been called upon to do work never before done by a cavalry force in a mountainous tract, on rough ground, up steep hillsides, surmounted by precipitous cliffs, and along rocky valleys; but all difficulties were conquered.

At Lydenberg the story of the Natal Field Force practically comes to an end, for here General Buller gave up command of the grand Army of Natal, which was thenceforth absorbed in the general Army of South Africa.

On October 6 General Buller left Lydenburg, which was garrisoned by General Lyttelton, and proceeded on his journey home. He was accompanied as far as Machadodorp by Lord Dundonald's Brigade. On the way back, the road along which we now retraced our footsteps told a very clear tale. I counted in the space of about three miles between 150 and 200 carcasses of animals that had fallen by the wayside, and how many more had been allowed to wander away and had died a few hundred yards off it is impossible to say. On October 8, at Machadodorp, we met General French, ready for his trek across to Standerton. There was some question of 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery going with him, but their horses were by now too 'beat' after the tearing work

of the last month amongst the Lydenburg hills. There were then no remounts at hand, so the best of the Chestnuts were given over to General French, and the remainder returned to the remount depot, there to get a month's rest or so before beginning again. On the 8th, also, Sir Redvers Buller came round and gave a farewell address to the various units he was leaving. To each regiment of Lord Dundonald's Brigade and to 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery he spoke a few words, saying good-bye and praising them for their work. Each regiment gave him a round of cheers, and surely never was so hearty a cheer given a General!

General Buller's progress from Lydenburg to Machadodorp was veritably a triumphant one. Along the line of communication every little post and every garrison turned out to wish him farewell. No stereotyped cheer was here; the hearty welcome that greeted him could only have come from most sincere hearts and throats. One is not surprised, for in the early days of the war Sir Redvers Buller had ever been at hand, ever mindful of his men, sharing their troubles and pleasures alike, though in those days it was mostly trouble. Later, when things went well, the sight of Sir Redvers Buller ever brought back to our minds those days of hard, stern fighting by which he saved Natal.

In the afternoon he went, and we all most willingly came down to give him a send-off at the station as he passed out of our lives.

Lord Roberts published the following special Army Order at Pretoria on October 10:

'General the Right Hon. Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., G.C.B., K.C.M.G., having relinquished the command of the Natal Field

Force, and being about to return to England, the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief cannot allow him to leave South Africa without thanking him for the great services he has rendered to his country while in command of that force, as well as for the ability with which he has carried out the operations while serving with the force under Lord Roberts' immediate command, which have resulted in the collapse of the Boer Army in the eastern portion of the Transvaal.

'By order,

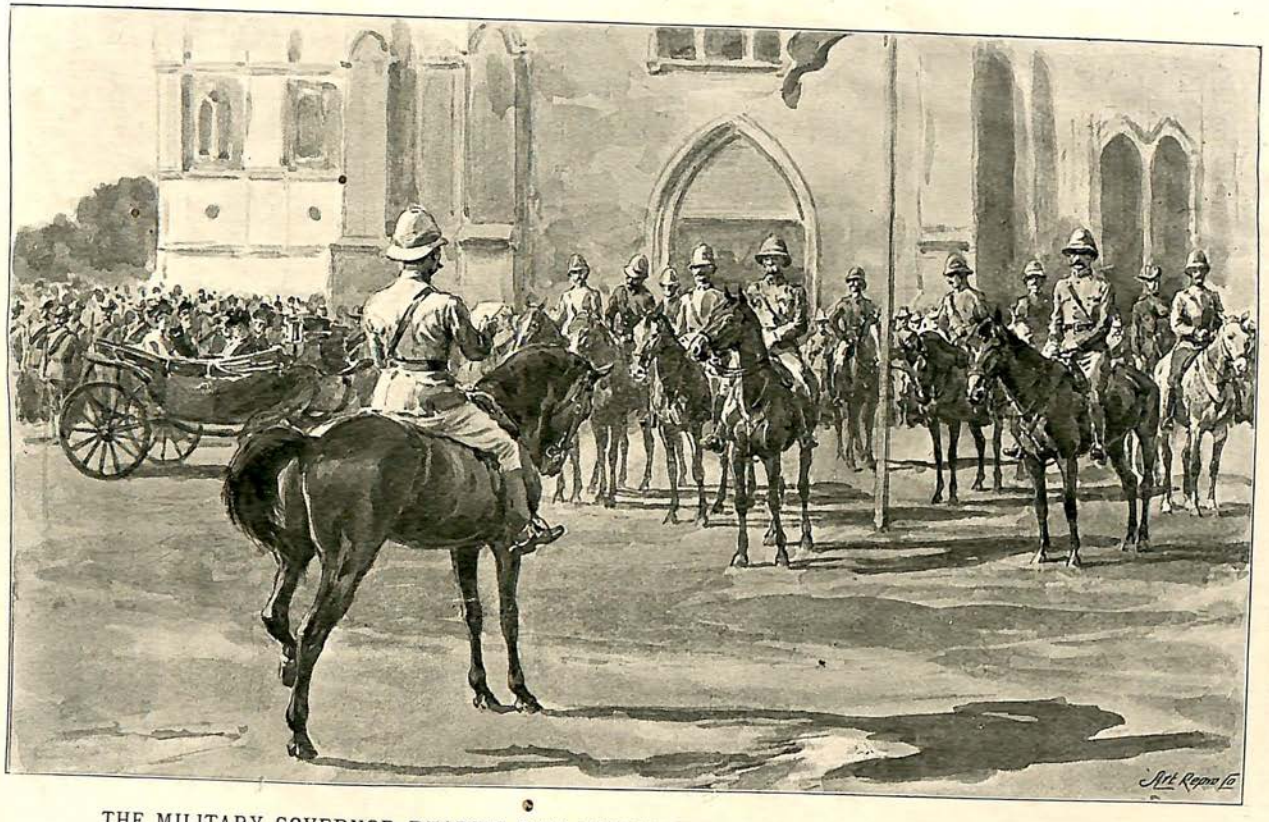
(Signed) 'KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM,

'Major-General, Chief of Staff.'

Lord Dundonald's Brigade was now practically broken up. Thorneycroft's were at Greylingstad, Strathcona's went with French, Bethune's had long been away near Standerton. Stewart's Mounted Infantry had remained at Lydenburg, and only the South African Light Horse and the Chestnut Troop remained. On the 11th, with orders to demobilize, we started for Pretoria. The Chestnut Troop was detrained again at Middelberg to change guns with 'G' Battery, who should take them to India, whither they were due to go. Lord Dundonald passed Middelberg on the 13th, and in a few kindly words wrote to say how he regretted not being able to say good-bye, and asking Colonel Paget to tell the men how much he had appreciated their work. On the 17th the South African Light Horse were ordered not to demobilize, and were sent to Standerton to begin fighting again. On the same day the Chestnuts came to Pretoria, where they were housed in the Staats Artillerie Barracks, and temporarily rehorsed from all directions to take part in Lord Roberts' review at the annexation of the Transvaal on October 25, in which they led the army past the Field-Marshal.

On October 30 they started for home.

And so the Natal Field Force ceased to exist.



THE MILITARY GOVERNOR READING THE ANNEXATION PROCLAMATION AT PRETORIA BEFORE LORDS ROBERTS AND KITCHENER.

From the *Graphic*, by E. BLAKE KNOX.

APPENDIX I

NOTE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECT OF THE NATAL CAMPAIGN*

Of the prevailing diseases with which I had to deal during my recent period of active service in South Africa, by far the most prominent in its severity and medical importance was typhoid or enteric fever. Statements to which I have had access as regards the ætiology of this fever and its prevalence, especially in respect to the colonies of Natal and the Transvaal, before the commencement of hostilities do not in all cases hold true when contrasted with the conditions under which those countries have been placed while in a state of war.

Before the war enteric was said to be very prevalent, especially in the highlands. It was epidemic during the Zulu War at Utrecht, and after the last Boer War at Newcastle, Pietermaritzburg, and Ladysmith, while garrison stations have continuously suffered year after year. February, March, and April are said to be the months of greatest prevalence, those of November, December, and January ranking next. The civil populations and natives were said to suffer severely, so that towns and kraals were to be regarded as suspicious foci.

During this war, previous to embarkation, each officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps was furnished with a memorandum prepared with elaborate care by the Medical Department of the War Office, and having reference to the probable diseases to be encountered in South Africa, and suggestions as to the prophylactic and other measures most suitable to be observed. In this

* Published by the author in more technical form in the *Medical Press and Circular*, August 28, 1901.

memorandum it was pointed out that the streams and rivers were constantly polluted by adjoining habitations and also by the carcasses of dead animals, and that an equally potent cause of infection was the neglect of conservancy arrangements and the constant pollution of soil, one of the chief sources of infection in camping-grounds being foul matter, of whatever kind, communicated to the soil by men who are suffering, or have suffered, from enteric fever. It was laid down that the best prophylactic measure for medical officers to follow was to see that in all camps, especially standing camps, an intelligent and daily use of disinfectants be enforced, and that sanitary supervision of the strictest possible nature should be adopted on the following lines: That in addition to the usual precautions required in connection with water-supplies, such as boiling and filtration, the daily use of disinfectants in all latrines, tubs, pits, etc., becomes essential. For this purpose quicklime was recommended as the best material. It was to be added in the form of freshly-prepared milk of lime (1 part hydrate of lime to 8 parts of water); the quantity to be added to receptacles, etc., should be, roughly, in the proportion of 1 part milk of lime to 20 parts of the contents.

The milk of lime was to be sprinkled freely on the surface of the soil in the neighbourhood, wherever surface pollution was likely to take place. Another important point was the protection of food from the contamination of flies or fæcal dust. Kitchen refuse was never to be allowed to accumulate, but was to be immediately burnt, and wherever flies appeared to congregate, it was to be held as an indication that refuse or other organic matter was present, and that steps were to be taken to use strong disinfectants to destroy, if possible, the flies breeding there.

Several other valuable suggestions, which time and space will not allow me to enumerate, were laid down in this memorandum; for instance, in this particular campaign an endeavour was made to move a step in advance of previous campaigns in the methods of obtaining, above all things, a pure water-supply for the troops; the second precaution advised by the Medical Department to the War Office was the provision of a filter suitable for troops on the move. Many of the so-called sterilizing filters used in previous campaigns are next to useless: they get out of order, the candles break, they get coated with mud, they are heavy and difficult to carry about, and generally, as experience has shown (for example,

in the Ashantee Campaign), they were left at the base as useless. The Medical Department, on careful consideration, recommended the adoption of the Berkefeld filter. This filter was tested for the first time at the Salisbury Plain manœuvres of 1899, and, though open to some objections for field service, was by far the best filter in the market. This Berkefeld filter was designed to filter 34 pints in ten minutes, and was sufficiently light to carry with troops. One was to be supplied to every unit of 100 men, and was said to be ready to come into operation whenever a pool or other source of water-supply during the march was found. It was supposed to filter at a sufficiently rapid rate to give each man of a unit of 100 men a fair quantity of drinking water within thirty minutes or an hour of the halt.

But having the defects common to sterilizing filters for troops on the march, it cannot be worked perpetually; the candle gets clogged, and the more clogged it gets the more difficult it is to work; and it was to rest with the men themselves to organize a method of passing this filter from man to man and keep it cleaned.

The third prophylactic measure advised by the Medical Department is one as yet in its infancy—that of vaccination of the troops by an antityphoid vaccine prepared in the laboratory of Professor Wright at the Army Medical School at Netley.

The principles upon which this antityphoid inoculation is based by him are as follows: First, laboratory experiments have clearly proved that animals inoculated with dead cultures of typhoid bacilli have a greater power of resisting infection from living typhoid bacilli than animals not inoculated. It may be inferred that this rule will hold good with man from the fact that the antityphoid inoculations induce in man precisely the same blood changes which they induce in animals. Secondly, the blood changes which occur in man by antityphoid inoculation are precisely the same as result from an actual attack of typhoid fever. The importance of this last fact becomes apparent when it is considered that the insusceptibility against further seizure, which supervenes upon an actual attack of typhoid fever, is almost certainly dependent upon the occurrence of the particular blood changes which are here in question. While at Netley I had the opportunity of seeing the preparation of this serum and personal demonstrations on the means of inoculation.

The vaccines are prepared from sterilized typhoid cultures grown either on agar-agar or nutrient broths of various composi-

tions; the strength of each vaccine is ascertained in the laboratory by inoculation on animals, and a small quantity of antiseptic is added to it to provide against all possibility of contamination. It is then put up for use either in sealed glass capsules for one or two vaccinations or in glass bottles, covered with paraffined india-rubber caps, containing enough serum for occasions when a number of inoculations are to be made simultaneously. The vaccine is sterilized in these bottles before it is sent out. Vaccination against enteric not being compulsory in the army, it was suggested to the various medical officers to call for volunteers among the officers and men of the units going out to the war; some were inoculated before going out, others on board the transports, and some in South Africa. Lectures were given in which the medical officers explained, in as concise and familiar terms as possible, the objects and expectations of inoculation. A call was then made for volunteers, their names were taken, and inoculation was made in batches, a careful record being entered of each man, with his age, number, and name of regiment. While on passage out in H.M.T. *Dilwara* I made a number of inoculations, chiefly among the officers and men of the Royal Lancaster Regiment and Eleventh Brigade Bearer Company, in conjunction with Captain Tyacke, R.A.M.C., following the usual methods as laid down by Professor Wright.

The men were taken in batches of five, the flank being the site chosen for injection, on account of the looseness of the subcutaneous tissue there, and also because, owing to a certain amount of pain and effusion which follows inoculation, it is always better to choose a site which lies on a part more or less protected from friction or joint movement. The skin having been first made surgically clean, the serum is injected from a hypodermic syringe which had been sterilized in oil at a temperature of 140° C. to 160° C. A thick fold of skin is then pinched up between the finger and thumb, and the needle passed down well into the subcutaneous tissues in the centre of this fold; after the necessary amount has been injected, the needle being gently withdrawn, the track left in the skin should be gently squeezed from without inwards. This last proceeding I think most important, as from the fact of the needle being a large one I have at times noticed a reflux of the serum down the track of the needle, either at its withdrawal or even some time after. The occurrence of such a reflux as this

might easily be overlooked and the case registered as inoculated, and such a subject contracting enteric fever at a future time, and perhaps dying, would bias the opinion of some people as regards the advantages of inoculation.

The clinical signs and symptoms which result from antityphoid vaccination are subject to considerable individual variations, and may be divided into constitutional and local. Of the former, most cases manifest some degree of malaise, and some even faintness or vomiting; some few show definite rigor. This symptom generally comes on from four to six hours after inoculation. Temperature is seldom below 101° F., and may rise to 103° F., but generally subsides within twenty-four hours. The local symptoms are much the same in all cases—effusions at the site of inoculation, heat, redness, swelling, pain—but these pass away within forty-eight hours. Most of my cases I treated at ten in the morning; all turned up for their mid-day meal, some feeling a little stiff in the side; about 25 per cent. were absent from their evening meal at 6 o'clock, and those who were then present were decidedly sore and stiff. The absentees, when inspected, were found lying up in their bunks, their chief complaint being that they were too stiff to rise. Of several hundred cases vaccinated, in no case did any suffering occur after forty-eight hours from the time of inoculation. Professor Wright has pointed out in his memorandum on the subject of vaccination the importance of the additional protection derived from a repetition of the inoculation at a later date, not earlier than eight or ten days from the first injection. This I was unable to carry out, owing to more men coming forward for inoculation than was expected. Finally I inoculated myself, and, though somewhat sick and sore for nearly forty-eight hours, I was able to continue my routine duties and eat my meals.

Having now briefly discussed the main precautions laid down before the war by the Medical Department, I shall endeavour to add my own personal observations on the results during the campaign. My observations are limited to the period commencing December, 1899, and terminating February, 1901, and the ground covered may be taken as fairly typical, as I have done duty in all four colonies.

I will first deal with the subject of inoculation. That inoculation has been a success I have no doubt, but this is a subject that will require lengthy statistical reports which cannot be completed

until the termination of hostilities, as many of the cases entered in the army returns as enteric, and many other cases entered as other kinds of fever, will have to be revised; for it must be remembered that many obscure fever cases have been diagnosed as enteric in persons who had been previously inoculated. And it must be kept in view that Widal's reaction, when obtained in a person who has been previously inoculated, does not in any way confirm the diagnosis of typhoid which may have been arrived at by ordinary clinical methods; and much less does it conclusively prove the correctness of such diagnosis. In view of the difficulty which has often arisen in diagnosing enteric in inoculated people, it is the reduction of actual typhoid mortality that must be taken, and not the reduction of the presumed cases of typhoid itself among inoculated persons. With this view, I have always made it a point carefully to examine all enteric cases in hospital which had been previously inoculated. From the evidence I have collected I am led to believe that the following results will be found true in the majority of such cases:

First, that inoculated cases, as a rule, run a mild course, and such complications as high fever, hæmorrhage, and perforation rarely occur; *i.e.*, that there is a very great increase of bactericidal power in properly-inoculated men.

Secondly, that severe cases of enteric occurring among inoculated men will always have a history of no distress at the time of inoculation, pointing to the likelihood of the vaccine not taking. None of the cases I either inoculated myself or saw inoculated have died from enteric to my knowledge, and none of these cases so far as I know have been inoculated a second time.

Passing from the subject of inoculation to that of water-supply, we come to what is really the crux of the whole question of our heavy mortality lists in South Africa. The water available for drinking in that country, south of the Pretoria-Delagoa line, is distinctly bad, having one ever-present ingredient—namely, mud. In the Lydenburg district, north of this line, the water we met with was pure and of a crystalline brightness, and wholesome where not poisoned, as I have found it on several occasions, by the ferrocyanide of potassium used in the mines. The water used by the Natal Field Force in its twelve months' journeying had perforce to be drawn from sources previously occupied and contaminated by the Boers. It had to be taken either from small

rivers or pans, the latter being marshy pools, and invariably of a dirty brown colour. The amount of mud in this water was always enormous, even when drawn from a river the size of the Tugela. Mud being never at any time a favourable adjunct to the food of man, he not being a suctorial animal, and acting as an irritant to the intestinal tract, produces an acute gastro-intestinal inflammation, which inevitably results in diarrhœa. Acute gastro-intestinal inflammation easily tends to become chronic; this is especially manifest and aggravated in troops fed on preserved field rations and biscuit. When the chronic stage is reached, the condition is most grave. From faulty digestive power the patient emaciates and becomes much debilitated, and the state of the mucous membrane of the intestines is such that a suitable nidus is presented to the germs of enteric or dysentery should they be present in any further water drunk. Should such a patient become infected, and should he not report sick, as is often the case, especially during fighting (for during such times 'Tommy' won't report sick unless he is really 'very sick'), let us see what happens. The patient resorts to the nearest donga; in a hot climate the matter rapidly dries, and is either blown about by the wind or washed by the first heavy rain into the nearest water-supply, ready to infect the next comer who draws water from it. Thus are diseases spread.

During the dark days of the three months preceding the relief of Ladysmith, the water question added itself to the numerous difficulties that General Buller and the Natal Field Force had to contend with. Until the Tugela was crossed no available water was fit for drinking at either Chieveley or Frere; it had to be brought by train in specially-constructed trucks, and carried thence in tanks on ox waggons to the troops and dealt out sparingly.

At Spion Kop it was the lack of any kind of water, together with the nature of our position, that led to the evacuation of the hill. Even when the Tugela was reached, the water of that river was already contaminated by corpses and dead animals, and was of a deep brown colour from the amount of mud it contained. Berkefeld filters, or in fact any artificial filters, were soon found to be useless. They became clogged after a few pints had passed through, and could not be further used. Fuel was so scanty that it took the troops all their time to find enough for cooking purposes. Fires could not always be lighted owing to the close proximity of

the enemy, as any smoke rising above a hill crest was sure to draw shell-fire. During the fourteen days preceding the battle of Pieter's Hill the entire army were huddled together in a valley through which the Tugela ran. Putrefied corpses of horses, cattle, and men contaminated every donga leading to the river, as well as the river itself. The Boers had also been camping in this ground for the previous three months. Torrents of rain fell daily, washing all kinds of contamination into the river, which at that time was our only water-supply.

The sewage and offal of fever-stricken Ladysmith and Intombi Hospital also passed by means of the Klip River into the Tugela.

Such a condition of affairs gave the medical officers of the Natal Field Force under Colonel Sir Thomas Gallwey their utmost to cope with, in addition to the already heavy work of attending the wounded. It had to be done, and it was done, and no epidemic of enteric of any proportion occurred.

When Ladysmith was relieved on February 28, 1900, it was found that the garrison of that unfortunate town had suffered severely from the water difficulty, and had it not been for the prompt sanitary action taken by the medical officers at the commencement of the siege a still greater amount of sickness would have occurred. As it was, 1,700 soldiers contracted enteric out of a force of 12,000, and about 1,800 contracted dysentery. The only source of water-supply in Ladysmith was the Klip River, giving a fluid of pea-soup consistency, due to the suspension of quantities of red mud. Major Westcott, R.A.M.C., who acted as special sanitary officer during this period, in his report on the analysis of the water available there, reports what was taken from the Klip River, though notoriously suspicious in quality, only contained 1 grain per gallon of chlorine, indicating an almost entire absence of organic matter, thus contrasting very favourably with that from a crystal stream on which he was called to report near the gorge of Ladysmith, which contained 14 grains per gallon, and that from a well in Intombi Spruit, which contained 12 grains per gallon, both of which, of course, were unfit for drinking purposes. As, however, the small extent of animal contamination was no indication of the absence of the typhoid poison, the water of the Klip River was sterilized before being drunk by filtration through Berkefeld filters. The mud was precipitated by alum, as long as it lasted, but by December 19 all the available alum had been

used, and another plan of clearing the water previous to filtration was adopted, which proved to be a great improvement on the previous process. Five open hogsheads were sunk in the river-bed at different levels, with the result that there was a constant supply at all water levels of perfectly clear water; this was pumped by the fire-engine into tanks on the bank of the river, of a total capacity of 5,000 gallons. Two water-carts made constant journeys to the filters, and these by working day and night gave a daily supply of 1,500 gallons, which was ample for drinking purposes, each unit drawing from the tanks 1 gallon per head of clear water. In connection with the influence of water-supply on the causation of enteric, Major Westcott noted that when the men in Ladysmith were supplied with filtered water there was a distinct drop in the admissions for dysentery, while those for enteric fever continued to increase.

On the arrival of General Buller's army in Ladysmith it was manifestly impossible from a sanitary point of view to quarter his troops in the town, and he broke his force up into brigades and stationed them within a convenient radius; some were placed on the line of the Tugela, others at Sunday's River, Smith's Crossing, Acton Homes, and Elandslaagte. It was to the last-named place that the Fifth Division, to which I was attached, was posted.

The water at Elandslaagte being anything but good, and the health of the troops not being as satisfactory as might be wished after their exposure and precarious living for the last few months, I was asked by the General commanding the Eleventh Brigade to undertake special duties with regard to water-supplies and general sanitary work in the camp, and to furnish him with a detailed list of suggestions dealing with these matters. After enumerating many of the points I have mentioned in this paper, I suggested the following remedies:

1. *Diarrhœa.*—That soldiers suffering from diarrhœa should in every case report sick as early as possible and come up for immediate medical treatment, as such cases, with proper therapeutic and dietetic treatment, are easily cured in the early stages, whereas the difficulty of curative treatment is greatly increased should the ailment be allowed to go on untreated, even for a few days. The dietetic treatment consisted in substituting a milk, cornflour, and soup diet, instead of the meat, bread, and vegetable diet usual in a standing camp.

2. *Water.*—All water-supplies to be daily inspected and marked by distinguishing flags. That three separate and distinct water-supplies were to be recognised—water for human drinking and food purposes, water for animals, and water for washing; that sentries were to be posted over each of these to see that no interchange should take place between the uses to which each pool was allotted. That all water used for human drinking purposes was first to be cleared of mud, either by precipitation with alum, 10 grains to the gallon, or passed through mechanical strainers; for this purpose I advised that clean empty barrels, of which we had a sufficient number, be utilized, one barrel to be sawn in half in such a way as to form two tubs, each tub to have a foot square cut out of the bottom, and the aperture covered by a number of layers of fine linen or khaki. This tub strainer was then to be placed over another complete barrel, which received the strained water, and this, when finally drawn off by a tap below, came out clear. The water was now to be passed into a Berkefeld filter, through which it easily ran, and it was finally to be boiled, if possible. Cleansing of water-carts and the men's water-bottles with permanganate of potash at intervals was also recommended.

3. *Disposal of Refuse.*—Strict orders were to be enforced as to men using only the recognised latrines, etc., and the proper disinfection of the same with chloride of lime. All kitchen refuse, including preserved-meat tin cans, were to be deposited in pits dug for the purpose, and burnt. All animal refuse was to be removed some distance out of camp before 8 a.m. daily, and burnt when dry. All dead animals were to be taken some miles out of camp, and buried under at least 3 feet of soil. As numbers of dry fœtid carcasses of horses lay about the battlefield of Elandslaagte owing to General White's engagement in the previous year, the most effectual method of destroying them was found to be burning.

4. *Inoculation.*—Recommendation of inoculation to all, especially young soldiers, with antityphoid serum is advisable.

Major-General Wynne did much to assist the medical officers in their sanitary duties. He embodied the above suggestions in camp orders, and paid daily visits of inspection to the various camps. On May 12 I was appointed to Lord Dundonald's Cavalry Brigade, and with this I remained for the following six months. It consisted chiefly of colonial troops, and comprised 'A' Battery

Royal Horse Artillery, Strathcona's Horse, South African Light Horse, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, Bethune's Mounted Infantry, Stewart's Mounted Infantry.' As it will be of interest to contrast the health of these Irregular Cavalry with the infantry with whom I had been during the previous six months, I will first give an outline of the composition of each regiment. 'A' Battery Royal Horse Artillery consisted of men who had been for some time in India at Umballa. Most of them had had malaria at some time or other. The South African Light Horse, as well as Thorneycroft's and Bethune's Mounted Infantry, were all enlisted in South Africa, and comprised men of remarkable wiry physique, but of very variable ages. Although a large proportion of them were Afrikanders either by birth or adoption, many of the men came from other colonies. This was particularly marked in the South African Light Horse, a number of whom were Australians. Stewart's Mounted Infantry consisted of troops drawn from a number of our regular infantry regiments. Strathcona's Horse was a regiment of Canadians of particularly good build and physique. They were all big men, and came from the north-western districts of Canada.

During General Buller's continuous advance through Northern Natal into the Orange River Colony, and finally through the Eastern Transvaal, Lord Dundonald's Brigade acted as the advance-guard of the army, and did all the scouting. We were also responsible for the selection of water-supply and camps and the sanitary conditions necessary for the preservation of the health of the main body when it came up. Colonel W. B. Allin, R.A.M.C., Principal Medical Officer of the Natal Field Army, is to be congratulated on the results of his labours in this direction, for no camp for the succeeding forces was selected without his first making a thorough investigation of the water-supply and other hygienic surroundings. This was in addition to the amount of attention paid to the food and blankets of the men, and although hampering General Buller with extra transport (he carried 1,503 medical diets with the Natal Field Force after the line was left in the great advance north), such a course greatly helped to reduce sickness in the Natal Field Force, the statistics of which will very favourably contrast with any other field force, or with any other campaign our troops have passed through. I was with the cavalry for more than six months, and was agreeably surprised at the very small amount of sickness in Lord Dundonald's Brigade.

At the same time, it must be remembered that in a campaign any comparison between cavalry and infantry in the matter of health and admission to hospital is hardly fair. The mounted man, naturally, does not suffer so much from fatigue and thirst as does the foot soldier, who madly rushes to drink any water, no matter how muddy, that he meets with on the march, stirring up the mud, and thus still further polluting the fluid in his endeavours to fill his water-bottle. The hardened infantry reservist bears a favourable comparison with the infantry recruit in this respect on the march. While the former by experience has learned that he can march most easily, and perspire least, if he keeps from water during a march, and may be seen at a halt cooling and refreshing himself by merely rinsing his mouth with liquid, but not swallowing it, the recruit hugs his water-bottle as his most cherished possession, fills it at every puddle he can get to, and empties it with the same avidity as an infant does its feeding-bottle. The result of such continuous water-drinking is much discomfort, heavy sweating, and exhaustion, and these are the men who fall out on a march and fill up the ambulance-waggons. From what I have seen, I would be almost tempted to take the water-bottle away from the recruit on foreign service. Another, and perhaps the best, explanation as to why this colonial brigade contrasted so favourably with the home infantry was that so many of the men, being South Africans, had become inured to the climate and muddy water through long residence in the country, or had been used to country life in some other colonies. Another explanation might be the fact of mounted men constantly moving from one camp to another.

There is little further of interest to relate on the water question until we come to General Buller's progress north of Lydenburg. Here, while acting as advance Sanitary Officer of the Force, I had reason to condemn the water-supplies in several places, as they had been poisoned by cyanide of potassium. Lord Roberts had previously to this drawn the attention of the medical officers of his force to this danger occurring in the advance through the enemy's country. But I am not sure that any water was found poisoned on his side. The tests I employed were the ordinary ones, a ferric salt giving a blue precipitate with ferrocyanide of potassium; the precipitate insoluble in dilute hydrochloric acid, and decomposed by a solution of caustic soda. Cyanide of potassium also renders water alkaline. The large amount of iron

naturally existing in the water of the Lydenburg district made the poisoning of running water extremely difficult. In conclusion, I should like to remark, notwithstanding the fact that a sanitary officer has been condemned by Lord Wolseley as a useless encumbrance in time of war, that I think the campaign in Natal has clearly proved that the co-operation of the General Staff and the Principal Medical Officer in the first place in selection of camps, feeding, and clothing, and, secondly, what is even more important, the co-operation of regimental Commanding Officers with their regimental medical officers, show the present system to be the best. This could, no doubt, be perfected by the allotment of one or two special medical officers to the staff of the Principal Medical Officer of a field force, which officers would be made responsible for daily sanitary inspection of all standing camps, camping-grounds, and hospitals, and conduct water analyses, report on food and clothing, and perform medical and surgical research duties. *They could report direct to the Principal Medical Officer on the spot*, and not only assist him in sanitary matters, but be available for other purposes in times of urgency.

APPENDIX II

ROLL OF OFFICERS, WITH CASUALTY LISTS, HONOURS, ETC., OF SOME* OF THE REGIMENTS THAT SERVED WITH THE NATAL FIELD FORCE, 1900.

THE NAVAL BRIGADE IN NATAL.

H.M.S. *Forte.*—Captain E. P. Jones (awarded C.B.), Lieutenant F. W. Melvill (awarded D.S.O.), Lieutenant G. P. E. Hunt (awarded D.S.O.), Staff-Surgeon F. J. Lilly (promoted), Acting-Lieutenant J. M. Steel, Gunner E. Holland.

H.M.S. *Terrible.*—Commander A. H. Limpus (promoted), Lieutenant F. C. A. Ogilvy (promoted), Lieutenant S. R. S. Richards, Lieutenant J. S. Wilde, Lieutenant G. P. England, Sub-Lieutenant S. Newcome, Surgeon Lomas (promoted), Surgeon C. C. Macmillan; Engineers J. F. Arthur, A. E. J. Murray, F. J. Roskruge; Gunners J. Wright, E. J. Cole, E. Williams; Midshipmen P. F. Willoughby, R. T. Down, R. B. C. Hutchinson (awarded Conspicuous Service Cross), A. C. Ackland, A. E. Sherrin, H. E. W. C. Whyte, G. M. Skinner, G. L. Hodson, W. W. Hallwright, H. S. W. Boldero, J. A. G. Troup.

H.M.S. *Tartar.*—Lieutenants J. E. Drummond, H. W. James; Staff-Surgeon J. Hughes.

H.M.S. *Philomel.*—Lieutenants A. Halsey (promoted), C. R. N. Burne (promoted), A. Deas, F. A. Clutterbuck; Midshipman W. R. Ledgard, Clerk W. T. Hollins.

Natal Naval Volunteers.—Lieutenant Anderson (in command), Lieutenant Chiazzari (awarded D.S.O.), Lieutenant Barrett.

The Ladysmith Brigade: Captain the Hon. H. Lambton (in command, awarded C.B.), Lieutenants F. G. Egerton (killed), A. W. Heneage, L. Halsey, M. H. Hodges, E. C. Tyndale-Biscoe

* This list is of necessity incomplete, owing to the continuation of hostilities.

(late R.N.), E. Stabb, R.N.R. (died of enteric); Fleet Paymaster A. H. Kay (died, enteric); Surgeon J. G. Fowler; Engineers E. H. Ellis (promoted), C. C. Sheen (promoted); Gunner W. Sims (promoted); Midshipmen J. R. Middleton, H. T. Hayes, R. C. Hamilton, I. L. A. Carnegie, A. Stokes, E. G. Chichester, C. R. Sharp.

CASUALTIES.

	Officers.	Men.
Killed, or died of wounds ...	1	5
Died of disease	2	25
Wounded	1	4

2ND ROYAL LANCASTER REGIMENT.

COLONEL M. E. Crofton; LIEUTENANT-COLONELS E. W. Yeatherd (died of wounds), J. M. Gawne (*k.*), F. B. Matthews* (promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, and awarded D.S.O.); MAJORS A. J. J. Ross (*k.*), E. A. F. Carter, G. A. Carleton,* A. D. Thorne, C. G. Barton* (awarded D.S.O.), A. J. King* (awarded D.S.O.); CAPTAINS W. J. Mangles* (awarded D.S.O), W. Sandbach* (*w.*), J. A. Paton, M. W. Kirk (*k.*), G. L. Palmes* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), A. R. S. Martin* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major), F. M. Carleton* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major), A. M. Dykes* (*w.*), W. A. L. Lethbridge, G. R. Stephens (*w.*), R. G. Parker* (*w.*); LIEUTENANTS F. C. Davidson* (died of wounds), A. H. Wade (*k.*), R. H. Coe (*k.*), N. L. Lysons, C. E. Morrison, E. A. F. Vaughan (died of wounds), H. K. Clough, W. E. S. Woodgate (died of wounds), J. N. Nixon* (*w.*), E. F. Hausburg, N. J. Parker (*k.*), A. D. M. Browne, C. W. Grover* (*w.*), W. C. T. Hibbert, A. H. B. Foster, W. A. D. Lippert (*k.*), R. M. Luckock, T. C. R. Higgins, L. B. Webster, F. G. Theobald, E. C. Naper, E. Von Brockdorff, A. L. E. Merideth, J. Caddy, R. P. MacGrath, C. W. Jepson (Quartermaster). ATTACHED: Captain N. Tyacke,* R.A.M.C.; Captain W. A. Main and Lieutenant A. H. Kennedy, 1st V.B. King's Own.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

SERGEANT-MAJOR T. H. Johnson; QUARTERMASTER-SERGEANT B. T. Whittaker; SERGEANTS D. Tyson,† A. Millis, J. Crowe,

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

J. Whitehead, H. E. Smith,† E. G. Roebuck,† W. D. Southcott, J. Reddy, J. Roe, F. Butterworth, J. E. Donald,† G. C. S. McLeod; CORPORALS M. Connell, W. Bartley, G. Clarke; PRIVATES W. McGowan, C. Sach, J. Fahey, B. Moore, G. Roberts, W. Tatton, F. Aldred, S. Brooks, T. Roberts,† R. Hamilton,† C. Barry, T. Holland, A. Browne, W. Brien, R. Mason, E. Gething, R. Henderson, E. Ashlin, J. Hardwick; DRUMMER W. Clements.

CASUALTIES.

	Officers.	Non-commissioned Officers and Men.
Killed	9 ...	107
Wounded	8 ...	225
Died	— ...	26
Missing...	1 ...	32

2ND SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL E. J. Gallwey* (awarded C.B.); MAJORS R. B. Williams* (promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel), C. B. Little; CAPTAINS F. M. Peacock, S. L. V. Crealock (*k.*), L. G. I. Chandler, E. G. Elger (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), W. P. Braithwaite* (promoted Brevet Major), A. B. Whatman (awarded D.S.O.), W. J. Bowker (awarded D.S.O.), V. F. Keith Falconer* (*k.*); LIEUTENANTS H. F. Hardman, J. B. C. Thomson, C. B. Prowse,* P. M. Wardlaw, A. H. Yatman, I. B. Maddocks, R. H. M. C. Miers, A. W. S. Paterson; SECOND LIEUTENANTS H. G. R. Burgess-Short, H. I. K. Allfrey, J. C. Parr (*k.*), C. H. Little,* W. H. M. Freeston, A. R. S. Sale-Hill, E. W. Worrall, A. G. Harrison, L. E. C. W. Wilmer; CAPTAIN AND ADJUTANT E. M. Swayne; MEDICAL OFFICER Captain R. E. Holt, R.A.M.C (*k.*); LIEUTENANT AND QUARTERMASTER P. Moran.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

COLOUR-SERGEANT French†; SERGEANTS Oakes,† Hewlett†; PRIVATES Culland,† Marsh,† H. Hutchings.†

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 16; wounded, 69; died of disease, 22; missing, nil.

(*k.*)=killed. (*w.*)=wounded. (*d.*)=died of disease.
*=mentioned in Despatches. †=awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

2ND LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL C. J. Blomfield* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Colonel and awarded D.S.O.); MAJORS C. D. Wallington,* F. Amber*; CAPTAINS C. M. Brunker* (awarded D.S.O.), E. C. Tidswell* (awarded D.S.O.), W. F. Elmslie (*w.*), O. C. Wolley-Dod* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), C. H. Hicks (*k.*), J. N. Whyte,* H. V. S. Ormond* (*w.*), G. H. B. Freeth* (awarded D.S.O.), G. M. Stewart (*k.*); F. J. Radcliffe, E. C. Brierley, W. E. Sykes; LIEUTENANTS J. J. R. Mallock (*k.*), A. J. Allardyce,* R. S. Wilson (*w.*), D. F. Campbell* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H. Shaw, R. H. M. Moody, I. J. Marrable; SECOND LIEUTENANTS E. J. M. Barrett (*w.*), G. H. Hastings, M. G. Crofton (*w.*), J. C. Markes,* C. H. Unwin, J. L. Swainson, W. Millar (*k.*), K. Macnee, C. R. T. Hopkinson, C. E. M. Dansey,* G. H. Soames, E. Barlow, R. S. Allen (*w.*), J. H. Christie, G. B. Browne, A. L. Ross, C. Brand; CAPTAIN AND ADJUTANT R. B. Blunt* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major); LIEUTENANT AND QUARTERMASTER W. W. Ganly.* OFFICERS ATTACHED: Major W. P. Squire, R.A.M.C.; Captains S. Willcock, B. O. Fyffe, J. T. Wood, W. B. Pearson; Lieutenants H. V. A. Awdry* (*k.*), C. J. Griffin (*w.*), H. B. Roffey, E. Frazer* (*k.*), L. E. O. Charlton* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H. E. M. Hutchinson, D. W. Parker, E. A. L. Nickerson, F. A. Woodcock, H. S. Roch, R.A.M.C.; Civil Surgeon J. G. Gordon Munn.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

SERGEANT-MAJOR W. Moss†; COLOUR-SERGEANTS R. J. Potter† (*k.*), R. V. Couchman,† J. Maguire, W. Watson†; SERGEANTS T. J. Farrell,† J. Holmes,† W. Dyer, J. B. Quinton,† J. Sorsby, G. Brooks; CORPORALS G. White, A. Shaw, R. Howard, J. Sexton,† C. Taylor; PRIVATES F. Power,† J. Thomas,† J. Moody, R. Hodson, A. Jordan, G. Pearson, J. Ormesher, M. Lowe,† J. Coldwell, A. Ford, J. Mochridge, T. Brennan, T. Bamford,† T. Fleming, F. Lomax,† J. Turner,† T. Royle† (*k.*).

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 85; wounded, 247; died of disease, 23; missing, 126.

(*k*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

1ST ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL C. C. H. Thorold* (*k.*); MAJOR H. J. Archdale*; CAPTAINS A. P. Gough* (awarded D.S.O.), P. R. Mantell,* D.S.O., R. M. O. Glynn, G. F. Barttelot, R. S. Webber, H. Delme-Radcliffe,* H. J. Murdocks, R. C. B. Throckmorton, G. E. Rickman, W. G. Braithwaite* (awarded D.S.O.), R. G. B. Lovett (*k.*); LIEUTENANTS E. T. Le Marchant, W. Best, G. F. H. Dickson, O. de L. Williams, F. A. K. Stebbing (*k.*), W. M. Kington,* G. E. S. Salt (*d.*), D. Powell, H. Maddick, W. Harris, F. C. A. Hurt, C. C. Norman (*w.*), F. A. H. Nangle, A. H. Reynolds; SECOND LIEUTENANTS E. A. T. Bayly, W. J. H. Hughes, H. V. V. Kyrke (*w.*), A. R. H. Ryercroft, R. S. Ransome (Quartermaster). ATTACHED: Majors B. L. Mills, R.A.M.C., B. H. Phillips, Royal Reserve.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN AWARDED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

SERGEANT-MAJOR E. A. Parker; SERGEANTS W. G. King, C. Whinyates, S. Hotchkiss; CORPORALS W. Roberts, W. Townsend; PRIVATES J. Marshall, J. Price, J. Smith.

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 10; wounded, 54; died of disease, 2; missing, nil.

1ST ROYAL INNISKILLING FUSILIERS.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL T. M. G. Thackeray (*k.*); MAJORS J. F. W. Charley (*k.*), F. A. Sanders (*k.*), C. J. L. Davidson* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.); CAPTAINS R. M. Foot* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major), A. J. Hancocks (*w.*), F. G. Jones* (promoted Brevet Major), D. Maclachlan (*w.* and *d.*), W. L. P. Gibton (*d.*), E. J. Buckley* (*w.*), W. F. Hessey (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major), H. H. Leverson (*w.*), J. Evans (*w.*), F. C. Loftus (*k.*); LIEUTENANTS J. T. Lowry (*d.*), G. W. Morley, J. N. Crawford (*w.*), E. W. Atkinson, R. A. B. Young* (awarded D.S.O.), W. O. Stuart (*k.*), D. G. H. Auchinleck, T. W. Whiffen (*w.*), T. A. D. Best,* C. Ridings (*w.*), W. W. Meldon (*w.*), H. P. Pott (*w.*), J. G. Devenish* (*w.*), A. G. M. Gordon, G. R. V. Steward, S. H. Hutton (*d.*), J. A. Page, E. T. Inkson,* R.A.M.C. (awarded V.C.)

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

SERGEANT-MAJOR W. Martin†; SERGEANTS M. Delaney, A. R. Lee,† M. McMurran,† R. Branagh, W. Craig,† G. E. Framingham; CORPORALS J. Kelly,† J. Cleland†; PRIVATES L. Bryant, A. Thompson,† J. A. Gardner, P. Howard,† J. McArthur, S. McCormick, A. Mills,† J. Slawson; DRUMMERS C. E. Coucham, J. Swan, B. Fitzgerald.†

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 98; wounded, 248; died of disease, 26; missing, nil.

1ST BORDER REGIMENT.

COLONEL J. H. E. Hinde*; MAJORS J. S. Pelly* (awarded D.S.O.), R. H. G. Heygate* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H. S. Mayhew, W. F. Nash (awarded D.S.O.); CAPTAINS J. E. S. Probyn,* P. J. Bellamy, R. A. Browne (promoted Brevet Major), H. D. Tuson, A. Lyon, C. D. Vaughan (*w.*, promoted Brevet Major), E. G. Sinclair MacLagan* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.); LIEUTENANTS A. E. St. V. Pollard, F. G. G. Morris, G. E. Warren, P. F. B. Hawes, A. R. S. Lyon-Campbell, W. L. Allen, G. J. Marsh (*w.*), E. H. H. Lees, H. W. Garvey (*k.*), G. H. N. Jackson* (awarded D.S.O.), G. E. Beatty-Pownall, J. W. P. Senior, S. H. F. Muriel (*w.*), C. G. W. Andrews (*w.*), F. H. Harvey, G. H. Harrison; LIEUTENANT AND ADJUTANT C. L. Macnab*; CAPTAIN AND QUARTERMASTER J. King.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

SERGEANTS F. W. Mitchell, F. Lambeth, E. O. B. White; PRIVATES C. B. Jack, T. Watson.

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 9; wounded, 125; died of wounds, 5; died of disease, 15; missing, nil.

3RD KING'S ROYAL RIFLES.

LIEUTENANT-COLONELS R. G. Buchanan-Riddell* (*k.*), R. C. Bewicke-Copley* (awarded C.B.); MAJORS F. A. Fortescue, W.

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

S. Kays (*w.*, promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel), E. W. Thistlethwayte (*w.*), F. B. M. Henniker, W. H. Salmon; CAPTAINS H. C. Howard, H. C. Warre* (awarded D.S.O.), H. A. W. Briscoe (*w.*, promoted Brevet-Major), L. F. Phillips, R. H. Beaumont* (*w.*), C. W. Wilson* (adjutant, awarded D.S.O.); LIEUTENANTS Hon. R. Cathcart* (*k.*), A. R. Mildmay* (*k.*), G. A. P. Rennie* (awarded D.S.O.), D. H. B. H. Blundell* (*w.*), C. B. Petre (*w.*), G. F. B. Hankey, H. F. F. B. Foljambe, M. Pratt (*w.*), R. J. Grant (*k.*), H. Wake* (received D.S.O.), R. F. M. Sims* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), G. K. Priaulx, G. H. Davenport (*d.*), W. C. Harrington (Quartermaster); SECOND LIEUTENANTS A. F. C. Maclachlan* (*w.*), E. A. Bradford, W. S. W. Parker Jervis, B. J. Curling, J. S. C. Rose, F. V. Yeats Brown; MEDICAL OFFICER Major A. J. Rose,* R.A.M.C. (*w.*).

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

SERGEANT-MAJOR A. N. Hill; QUARTERMASTER-SERGEANT W. Humphries; COLOUR-SERGEANTS J. McLoughlin, A. Watkins,† A. Harman; SERGEANTS J. Baker, H. Pope, J. Keenes, T. Pidgeon,† F. Clay;† CORPORALS W. Jones,† J. Knight, E. Wenham, R. Allen,† A. Grindley, A. Muntzer, W. Slade, T. Tipson; RIFLEMEN A. McCarthy, R. Goodman, H. Smith, A. Benn, T. Moss, J. Findlay, J. Patrick,† H. Rowley, F. Lembrick,† E. Ashworth, W. Kibby.†

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 47; wounded, 143; died of disease, 57; missing, 2 (afterwards rejoined).

THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS.

COLONEL L. G. Brooke* (*w.*, awarded C.B.); MAJORS J. de C. O'Grady* (awarded C.B.), M. G. Moore* (promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel), N. A. D. Barton*; CAPTAINS A. Bell (promoted Brevet Major), G. Ford-Hutchinson, D.S.O. (*w.*), J. Robertson,* W. Grylls,* W. Sarsfield, J. Raven;* LIEUTENANTS P. Horton* (Adjutant), A. S. Hog, W. A. White* (promoted Brevet Major), H. Jourdain, J. Conry* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H.

(*k*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

M. Hutchinson* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), A. Wise (*w.*), W. Molony, G. Brooke (*w.*), C. Hack,* F. Pomeroy, A. Lambert, E. Jones (*w.*), R. Pague, S. Hucheson,* H. Wratislaw (*w.*).

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN AWARDED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

SERGEANT-MAJOR Hart; SERGEANTS M. Murphy, T. Shearer, J. Smith; PRIVATES W. Lennon, J. Naughton, J. Reynolds, P. Livingstone.

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 56; wounded, 177; died of disease, 45; missing, nil.

2ND ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS.

BREVET COLONEL C. D. Cooper* (awarded C.B. and promoted Major-General); LIEUTENANT-COLONEL H. T. Hicks* (awarded C.B.); BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL Sitwell* (*k.*); MAJORS S. G. Bird* (awarded D.S.O.), F. P. English* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel); CAPTAINS C. O. Hensley* (*k.*), G. A. Weldon (*k.*), E. Fetherstonhaugh* (promoted Brevet Major), M. Lowndes* (*w.*), A. Dibley* (*w.*), C. F. Romer* (promoted Brevet Major), M. P. Lonsdale, H. M. Shewan* (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H. W. Higginson,* G. N. Cory* (awarded D.S.O.), C. N. Perreau (*w.*), F. N. Le Mesurier; LIEUTENANTS G. S. Higginson, C. Garvice,* C. T. Grimshaw,* L. F. Renny, T. M. D. Haskard* (*w.*), T. B. Ely (*d.*), R. C. B. Henry (*k.*); C. T. Genge (*k.*), T. H. Frankland, F. B. Lane, H. D. Britton* (*w.*), J. T. Dennis (*w.* and *d.*), A. De B. Bradford;* LIEUTENANT AND QUARTERMASTER Rolands*; MEDICAL OFFICER L. N. Lloyd* (R.A.M.C., awarded D.S.O.); OFFICERS ATTACHED: Captains Maitland (*k.*) and Haldane (Gordon Highlanders), Major Gordon* (*w.*, promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel); Captain A. H. Bacon (*k.*), Lieutenants A. H. Bacon (*k.*), R. McLeod (*w.*), A. V. Hill (*w.*), Brodhurst Hill (*w.*), E. A. De Salis* (awarded D.S.O.), J. C. Halahan (1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers).

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

SERGEANT-MAJOR Burke; COLOUR-SERGEANTS Gage,† Guilfoyle, Cossey, McNay, Hunt,† Merry, James; SERGEANTS

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

Duncan, Sheridan,† Connor,† Church,† Black, Ryan,† Birks, Brown†; CORPORALS Frost,† Sutton, Melia†; PRIVATES J. McCormack,† Bryan, M. Farrelly,† McCormack, M. Kavanagh,† Tighe, Kelly, Holmes,† Reid,† C. N. Wallace,† W. Connell.

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 75; died of wounds, 14; died of disease, 45; wounded, 348; missing (since rejoined), 162.

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.

OFFICERS WITH GENERAL BULLER'S FORCE, FEBRUARY, 1900.

COLONELS T. J. Gallwey,* C.B., Principal Medical Officer (awarded K.C.M.G.), J. A. Clery* (awarded C.B.); LIEUTENANT COLONELS W. B. Allin* (promoted), P. H. Johnston (awarded C.M.G.), J. Armstrong;* MAJORS O. Todd,* G. T. Goggin,* E. O. Milward,* E. R. Cree, A. P. Hart, S. Townsend,* T. P. Woodhouse, T. R. Lucas (awarded C.B.), F. A. B. Daly (awarded C.B.), A. S. Rose* (wounded in action at Vaal Krantz), W. C. T. Poole, J. C. Culling,* R. I. D. Hackett, H. H. Johnston, G. H. Younge,* W. Babtie,* C.M.G. (awarded V.C. for gallantry at Colenso and promoted), C. W. Theile, F. J. Lambkin, G. W. Brazier-Creagh* (awarded C.M.G.), F. T. Wilkinson, L. Haywood,* J. D. T. Reckitt, R. Kirkpatrick* (awarded C.M.G.), J. Hickman, A. Baird,* A. Dodd,* T. B. Winter,* F. S. Heuston (awarded C.M.G.), J. R. Mallins, R. J. McCormack.* S. F. Freyer* (awarded C.M.G.), J. D. Moir,* C. W. Johnson, E. Davis, A. O. Fitzgerald,* S. R. Wills, J. H. Brannigan (wounded in action at Colenso), B. L. Mills, J. G. Black,* J. B. W. Buchanan,* W. P. Squire, J. J. Gerrard, E. Eckersley, T. Browning, W. S. Dowman, R. Caldwell, A. B. Hinde,* G. Hilliard, C.M.G. (died of wounds received in action at Newcastle), A. L. F. Bate, R. E. Kelly, J. Paterson; CAPTAINS M. L. Hughes* (killed in action at Colenso), H. J. Parry* (awarded D.S.O.), J. W. Jennings, D.S.O., C. Dalton* (wounded in action near Colenso), N. Faichnie,* F. W. Begbie,* E. M. Pilcher, E. M. Morphew,* N. Tyacke,* C. B. Martin,* J. F. M. Kelly, J. D. Alexander,* G. S. Crawford, F. G. Faichnie,* F. A. Symons, J. H. Campbell* (wounded in action at Pieter's Hill); LIEUTENANTS R. D. Jepson, R. H. Fuhr*

(*k*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

(awarded D.S.O.), J. G. Gill, J. W. Leake, J. W. Houghton, D. E. Curme, R. H. Lloyd, G. C. Phipps, G. J. A. Ormsby, A. O. B. Wroughton, F. J. Palmer,* H. Simson, H. H. Norman, W. R. Blackwell,* H. M. Nicholls, H. F. Hart, S. G. Butler, J. J. W. Prescott* (awarded D.S.O.), P. H. Falkner, J. W. Morris, E. T. Inkson* (awarded V.C. for gallantry at Pieter's Hill and promoted), A. A. Seeds, L. N. Lloyd (awarded D.S.O.), H. B. Onraet* (killed in action at Pieter's Hill), J. H. R. Bond, L. W. Harrison, F. S. Irvine, H. M. Morton, M. H. Babington, F. G. Richards, E. Blake Knox* (wounded in action at Pieter's Hill), H. S. Roch, F. Harvey, C. E. Trimble; QUARTERMASTERS Hon. Captain D. J. Gilman, Hon. Lieutenants R. Adams,* T. F. Brake,* J. B. Short, D. Dallas, P. Mackintosh, G. H. Painton, H. S. Brook, H. Spackman, G. A. Sellex, J. Ferguson, F. W. Hall, A. Morrison, R. O. Roberts.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN AWARDED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

SERGEANT-MAJORS J. de S. Stewart, R. Watson, A. R. Titchener, D. Roberts, F. B. Bowyer; STAFF SERGEANTS F. H. Dolman, J. R. Gibbons, C. W. Measures, N. Cornell, T. Johnstone, H. Lattemore, F. S. Marseland, J. Hampton, R. Burrows, C. H. Cooper; SERGEANTS T. H. V. Coad, J. Leonard, J. Bright, E. F. Cadogan, T. Davy, F. G. Bright, W. H. Servey; PRIVATES A. Nunns, J. Harvey, M. T. Sparkes, H. Burford, R. N. Macgregor, D. Stuart, E. F. Woodier.

THORNEYCROFT'S MOUNTED INFANTRY.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL A. W. Thorneycroft (awarded C.B. and Brevet Colonel); MAJORS G. S. St. Aubyn (promoted Brevet Major), Hon. L. F. Byng, W. E. Peyton (awarded D.S.O. and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel); CAPTAINS E. M. Morris (promoted Brevet Major), R. A. Bettington (*w.*), C. A. Martin, Hon. J. H. Petre (*k.*), C. Hamilton (awarded D.S.O.), W. Knapp, A. B. Boyd Wilson, H. Mann (*k.*), M. G. Farquhar (awarded D.S.O.), C. S. Knox-Gore (*k.*), E. M. J. Molyneux (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), R. J. Barrett, J. Thompson (awarded D.S.O.), A. D. Green (awarded D.S.O.), C. F. Minchin (awarded D.S.O.), J. S. McK. Shea, S. G.

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

Hawarden (Medical Officer), B. Bertram (Medical Officer), G. F. Chipman, J. Hendry; LIEUTENANTS J. H. Baldwin (*w.*), J. Bruce-Steer, W. Otto (*w.*), C. M. Jenkins (*k.*), E. Bosomworth, P. A. Ogilvie, N. K. Prettyjohn, Flower Ellis (*k.*), R. F. Wynne, W. R. Ponsonby (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), H. J. Foster (*w.*), G. S. D. Forbes (awarded D.S.O.), C. G. Grenfell (*k.*), P. Newnham (*k.*), Hon. N. W. Hill-Trevor (*k.*), H. S. McCorquodale (*k.*), R. H. Villiers (awarded D.S.O.), J. W. Sharp, B. I. Rose (*d.*), I. W. J. W. Howard (*w.*, awarded D.S.O.), Earl of Rosslyn, L. C. F. Oppenheim, W. J. Anderson, R. P. Nicol, R. Carr, Hon. Marcus Hill-Trevor, G. O. Roos (*w.*), H. P. Piggott (*d.*), E. H. Rouse, Hon. P. S. St. Aubyn, F. Graham, H. E. O. Green, P. G. Stockley, G. F. Gore, W. G. Cunningham, R. Wight Boycott, A. R. Best, J. Ousely, H. B. Farquhar, L. W. Birt, J. W. V. Fletcher, A. H. Pryor, F. C. Belson.

MEDALS FOR DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT IN THE FIELD.

SERGEANTS J. H. Jeffries, J. Mason, H. McFeeters, J. A. Mayne, H. M. Spurling, W. F. Strong, J. B. Mckechnie; PRIVATES G. E. Ackland, J. B. Fischer, A. Neilson, W. Fox, W. J. Lyons, F. Glover.

CASUALTIES, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Killed, 48; wounded, 94; died of disease, 21; missing, nil.

(*k.*) = killed. (*w.*) = wounded. (*d.*) = died of disease.
* = mentioned in Despatches. † = awarded Distinguished Service Medal.

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THE END

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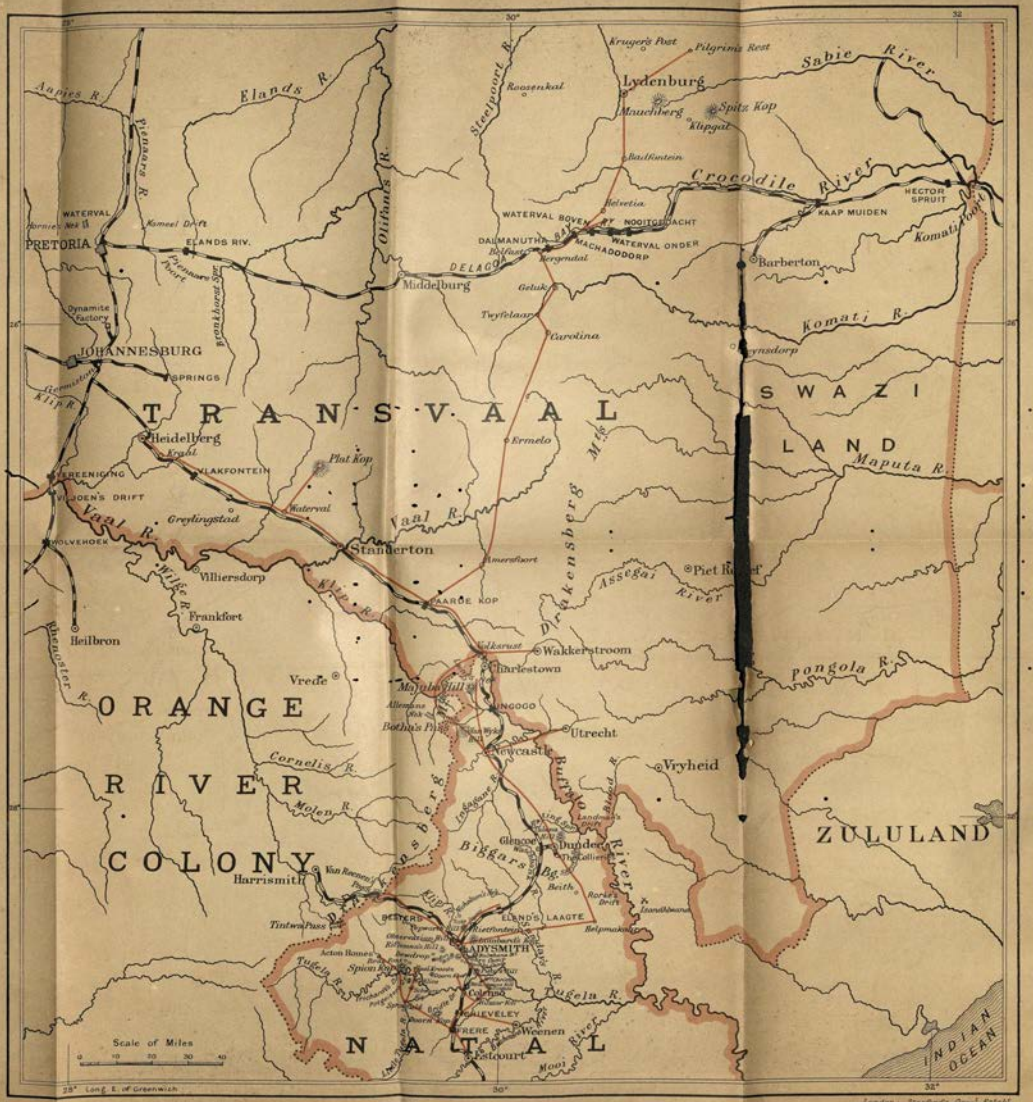
GENERAL MAP ILLUSTRATING SPHERE OF OPERATIONS OF THE NATAL ARMY

The thin Red line indicates General Buller's line of march as described in the text.
The broad Pink band indicates the political boundaries of the Colonies.



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